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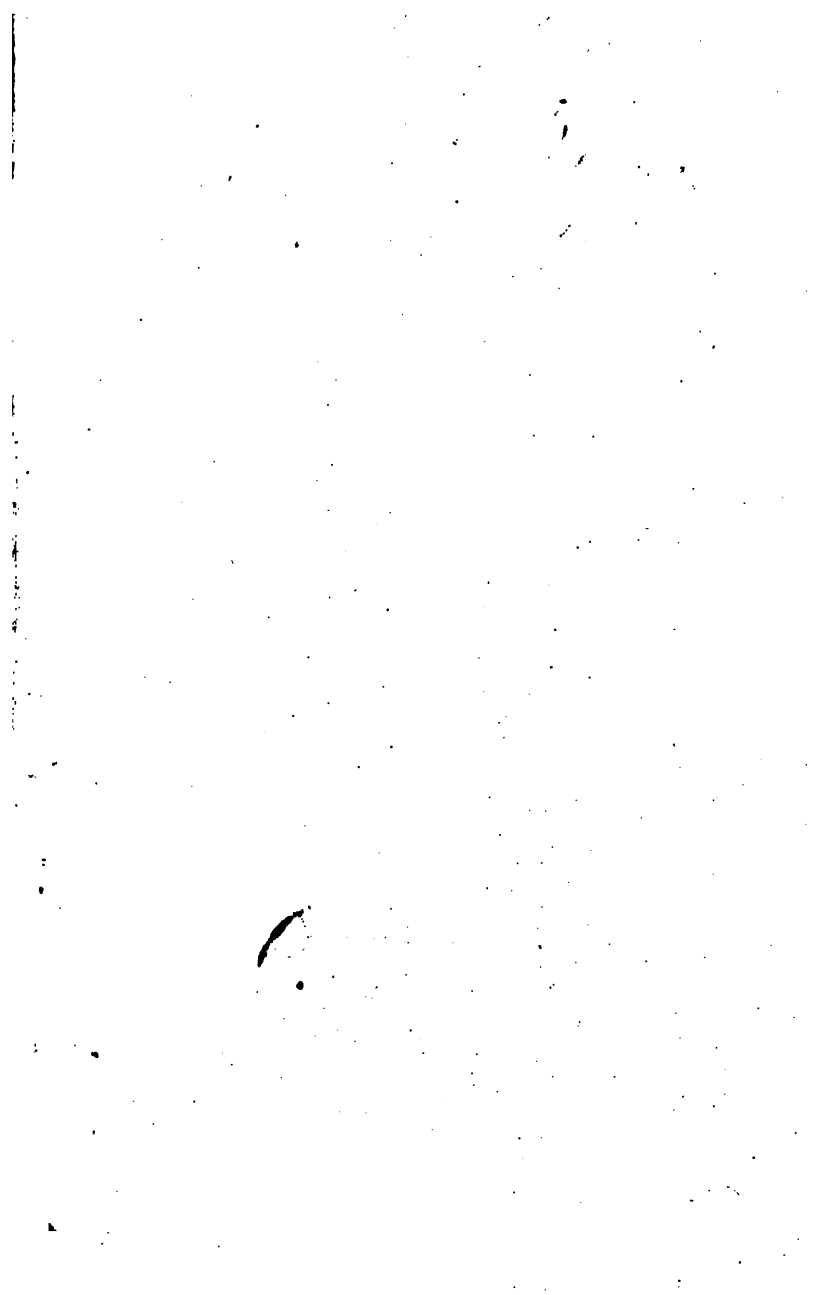
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ON SOME OF THE
MINOR MORALITIES
OF LIFE.





ON SOME OF THE
MINOR MORALITIES
OF LIFE.

REVISED FROM THE 'CHRISTIAN SPECTATOR.'

BY EDWARD WHITE,

AUTHOR OF 'THE MYSTERY OF GROWTH,' ETC.



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NOTICE TO THE READER.


THE composer of these meditations was some years ago engaged as editor of the *Christian Spectator*, a monthly magazine which finished its course about Christmas 1866. In the discharge of that function he was called upon to write many grave discourses on the most serious subjects ; next, arguments on matters of general interest and public policy ; and, lastly, certain papers which were required to be a little sparkling, at least upon the surface, for the amusement and possible benefit of the younger readers of the magazine. The gravest discourses have been already reprinted in one volume. The political arguments are out of date. This little book contains those lighter pieces which stand last in the enumeration, and which some partial friends have thought worthy of preservation.

The author foresees that persons of a thoroughly grim disposition may neither understand nor approve the frame of mind in which these articles were written.

They may insist that the same fountain ought not to send forth saline essays and sermons. The writer, however, appeals to all who love the company of young people for a more favourable judgment. Every mind has its own modes of thought and expression, and some can quite innocently speak the different languages both of the pulpit and the fireside.

The fact that every person is born of two parents accounts for many of the diverse manifestations in individual character, which are usually set down to blameworthy inconsistency. The common remark on the degrees of likeness to father or mother, respectively, embodies a popular philosophy which requires to be carried still further. Persons who are descended from parents and grand-parents whose talents and humours widely differed will usually display the one or the other according to circumstances. And sometimes a quaintly-smiling ancestor will appear again for a moment in a generally grave descendant even of the fourth generation.

However this may be, it is hoped that the reader will not find the grave and the gay improperly intermingled here, nor severely denounce the endeavour to



mend some social immoralities of the minor order by an occasional mingling of the lively and severe.

As to the contents of this series of papers, although much will be found in them of a harmless quality, there is, after all, more reason to apprehend condemnation for excessive sharpness than for excessive lightness of touch. It must then be diligently borne in mind that these rods were originally brought out one at a time,—and only once a month,—and that if they now, when collected, make up rather a formidable bundle,—this is not because the author aspires to the office of a lictor with the fasces, but only for the convenience of carrying them. Perhaps it may also be said that they are bound together with holiday wreaths of ivy and roses.

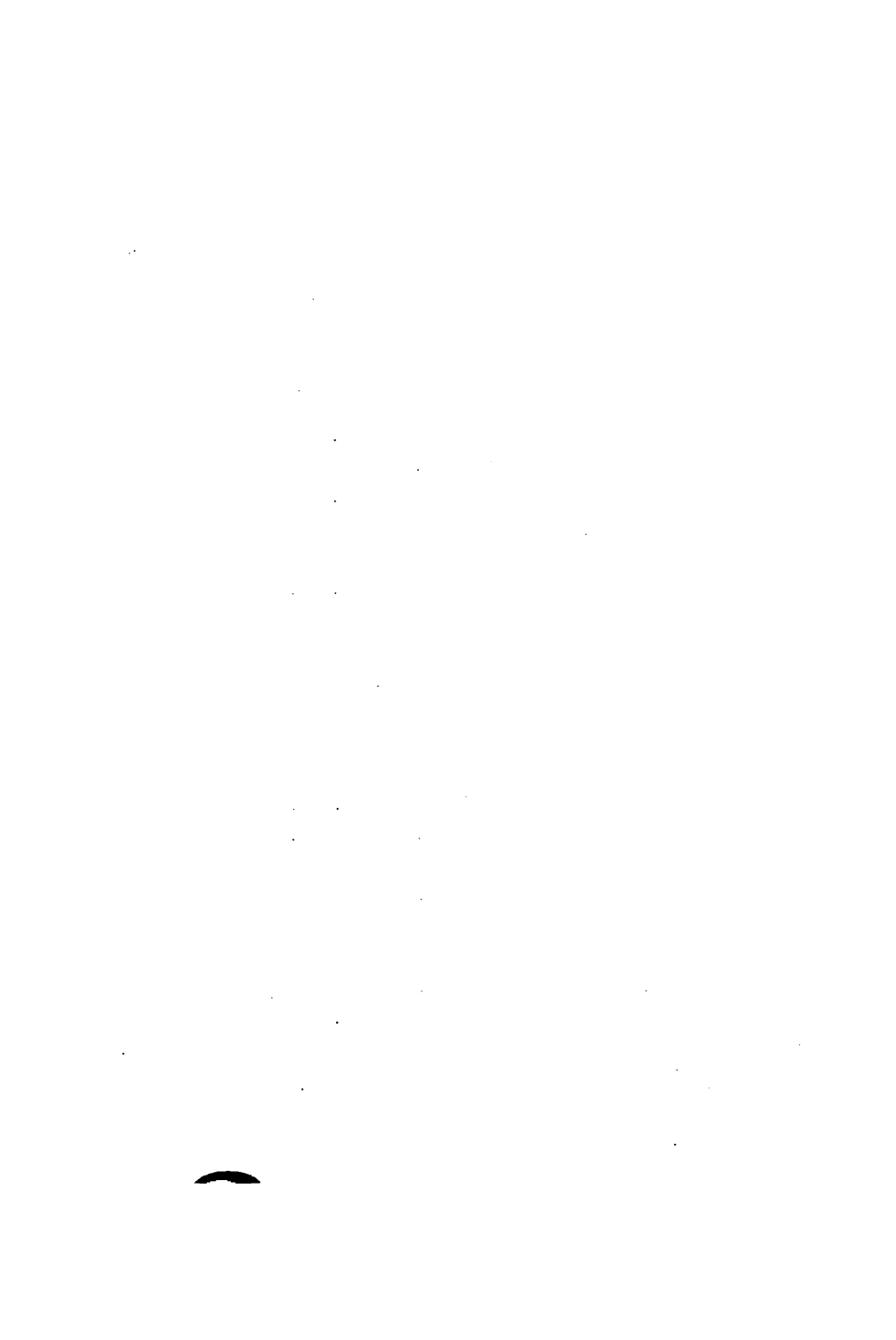
The amiable reader is requested to admit that we ought not to reprehend every little criticism on our character, manner, or actions, offered by our friends, as deserving of the greater excommunication, whether uttered openly or behind our backs. A tolerably sharp remark may occasionally be made without impeaching the substantial goodwill and affection of the remarker. Perhaps the reflection was exceedingly just. And

considering the infirmity of human nature, as seen both in ourselves and our neighbours, it would be exacting too much, especially of those whose profession. it is to write criticism, to forbid them ever to say anything disagreeable.

Go forth then, little Book, and try thy fortune in pica among old and young, as a Christmas or a New Year's present, as a book for the Fireside or the Garden, and generally as a remembrancer for considerate souls. Perhaps thou wilt find a certain number of friends both to-day and to-morrow who will give thee a welcome, knowing that they have read in the apocryphal but inestimable work of the Son of Sirach, that 'he who despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.'

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ON SOME OF THE MINOR MORALITIES OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE DUTY OF RETURNING BORROWED ARTICLES.

THE practice pursued by many of our fellow-creatures in relation to things which they have borrowed in distress is such as to add a special propriety to the precept that we should lend, hoping for nothing again. They afford you every facility for thus limiting your expectations when you oblige them with the loan of your property.

It is, indeed, the part of a brotherly man to be ever a merciful lender. Ownership is not absolute, but comparative. Property has its duties as well as its rights. If your neighbour, visited by an unexpected traveller, and


having nothing to set before him, thunders at your front door at the dead of night, and shouts out urgent petitions for the loan of three loaves, when you are warm in bed, enjoying your first restful sleep, and the children are dreaming in cribs, or suspended in hammocks around, it may be a severe trial of your friendship to arise and give him ; but it is your bounden duty to strike a light, to fling over you a dressing-gown, to open the front door, to visit the pantry with equanimity and good temper, and to give him as many loaves as he needs in his painful and awkward predicament. By so doing you associate yourself with his act of hospitality, and earn the hearty thanksgiving of the untimely guest of darkness ; and you may return to your blankets, when the deed is done, with a glowing heart, that will soon steep your eyelids again in the delicious slumbers of the just.

But then, if your ' friend ' (impostor that he is, to desecrate so sacred a name), on the following day, or on the next festival of bread-

— •

making, forget to present himself at your door with three of the lightest and best-baked loaves of all his batch, sprinkled over with the fragrant incense of abundant and gracious acknowledgment, he, by his own omission, brands himself upon the forehead with a mark that indicates that he is no distant cousin to a burglar, and is training himself for robbery with violence in the corners of the streets. Such a man is disentitled for ever from the privileges of friendship, and deserves to be saluted and dismissed at his next nightly application with a douche of cold water and much commination from the upper windows of the abode.

Or, if you have opened your humble habitation for an evening entertainment, hanging Chinese lanterns from the ceilings, and disposing coloured lamps among the evergreens—spreading all-various sweetmeats and sandwiches, jellies and confections, upon your supper-table—distributing sound port, or claret of the period, to the tee-totallers, or, if




a total abstainer, jets of tinted soda-water from effervescing fountains in wicker work to the wine drinkers, to each man according to his natural or moral requirements—regaling the mixed company, according to the English custom, with young ladies' sonatas and songs, delivered in a universal buzz of small talk and inattention,—and at the end of the exhilarating festivities it is discovered that there is a terrible downpour of rain, for which several of the pedestrian guests are unprovided with umbrellas,—then it is plainly your duty to volunteer the loan of your second-best *parapluie*, and, in very urgent cases of distress, even of your best new green silk, with curiously-carved ivory handle all complete, from Sangster's famous magazine. You may inwardly regret the necessity for the loan; yet in magnanimously yielding to the dictates of compassion you have only done that which it was your duty to do.

But if, in the hurry incident to a general break-up and departure, you should happen

to forget the individual to whom you exhibited this true philanthropy, and the person obliged should be so far in sympathy with your obliviousness as to permit that umbrella to stand in the corner of his own entrance-hall for several days following upon the entertainment aforesaid, to be used by miss or master on the first occurring exigence of rain, and thus to acquire the aspect of a chattel of his own, and he wholly fail to send a messenger to you with umbrella and humble gratitude for the same, thus requiting you both for your entertainment and for your timely loan,—then that person writes himself down as one who has no vision for the finer traits of character and justice. He is one who proves himself unworthy of being kept dry by his neighbour's goodness. He is one on whom the heaviest rains might equitably descend for the rest of his lifetime, until he sank, soaked through and well-nigh washed away, into a damp and dishonoured grave. The man who will quietly appropriate an umbrella lent to him in a storm

is capable of many parallel misdemeanours. He will embezzle umbrellas left at his own house by accident, and his wife will probably embezzle parasols, without taking the trouble to inquire into their ownership. He would appropriate jewellery, watches, and small treasure trove in gold and silver, in the house of his friends, without any diligent endeavour to restore them to the luckless losers. He would admit stray sheep into his flocks without compunction, and very likely say grace over the mutton. He would borrow small monies in omnibuses, at pic-nics, and even at the most solemn festivals of worship in the church, and forget to recoup the lender, 'because the sum borrowed was so small.' His complexion is visibly darkening into that of a moral African—a man dead to the sense of right in little things; and, in the fear of such persons, it is but a measure of imperfect precaution to have your name and address, and an exhortation to return it, if borrowed, clearly engraved upon the article in which, through your



'friend's' peculiar notions of duty, you may hold so frail a proprietorship.

Or, once again ; if you are a man rejoicing in that best of treasures, next to a good conscience or a happy home, a well-stored library, in which, by dint of many years' exertions, you have collected, in your various travels, books which have become part and parcel of your intellectual being, and you are visited by persons feigning themselves just men, professing an interest in study or in the pursuit of wisdom, and they walk before your shelves admiring, (as they well may,) first one and then another of your literary delights, until the sight has kindled in their guilty bosoms the desire of 'borrowing' some of them for the improvement of their minds,—it is your duty, yes, even in this department of your establishment, it is your duty to lend them a few for their necessity. A large part of usefulness to your fellow-creatures consists in lending them good books. How cheerfully would I lend this treatise to one, and that to

another of my acquaintance, if they would but accept the loan, and diligently read it. How certainly would this and that book effect a revolution, you say, in So-and-so's whole way of thinking and acting in religion, or politics, or social life, if he would but give up reading the *British Trumpeter*, and take to wholesome literature in its stead. Yes, we must lend even our favourite books, although it may sometimes feel like lending an eye or a finger to a brother-man ; for here also it is more blessed to give than to receive.

But to hope for nothing again in this department seems absolutely beyond the limits of mortal capacity for virtue. Who *can* help wishing to see again a volume borrowed from a set bound in calf gilt, and lent perhaps to a person whose skin is an integument bearing some distant resemblance or analogy to that style of binding ? Who can lend a book marked with the annotations of youth and manhood, endeared by the recollections of departed years, when you took it in your port-

manteau as a companion to France or Switzerland, or to the lakes of Westmoreland or Scotland, or to the moors and tors of Devonshire, and not wish to see its face one day returned to its niche beside other beloved companions of your solitude?

And *if*—alas, that the hypothetic term should have so frequent a fulfilment of its darker alternative—if the person to whom in your luckless charity you imparted the use of your intellectual treasure for a while not only should *not* return it, (carefully used, free from dogs' ears, and also from stains of bread and butter, or of ill-dyed gloves,) but should without remorse leave it month after month, perhaps year after year, upon his shelves, until you have forgotten to whom you lent it, so that you eventually lose your property,—methinks that man, be he who he may, lay or cleric, gentle or simple, Protestant or Catholic, is guilty of a roguery which deserves to be punished by a deprivation of all books for a period short or long in proportion to the

heinousness of his larceny. Let such a man—albeit pluming himself upon many excellences, and making a distinguished figure in Church or State—say to himself, as he looks upon the unreturned volumes that deck his home, ‘I speak or write well upon truth and morality; but I am—shame upon me—akin to robbers and other wrong-doers expiating their crimes in durance vile. I borrowed these books under an implicit understanding that I should read them forthwith, and speedily render homage to the laws of property by returning them to their owner, thus showing forth and requiting the benefit which I have received from his compassion. But I have long passed all honourable limits of delay; I have converted a loan into a depredation; I have acted like the dangerous classes of society. I am a reverend windbag, or a lay impostor, full of high-sounding phrases, but not possessed of virtue sufficient to keep the commandment which says, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’’ Such wholesome meditations as these would

probably issue in the restoration of innumerable books to the shelves of the righteous ; and the newly-formed habit of returning such borrowed articles as books and umbrellas would act as an excellent training for the higher duty of paying twenty shillings in the pound to creditors in every direction.

CHAPTER II.

ON SIMPLICITY AND AFFECTATION.

IF any one could or would write a natural history of the Minx, and another natural history of the Swell, he would probably say all that it might be desirable to condense into this chapter. Society affords abundant opportunities for the study of either species. There are multitudes of admirable young people; but a man seldom goes into a large general company without meeting some specimen, more or less pronounced, of one or other of these two varieties.

What is a minx? Richardson, in his enormous quarto, gives little aid towards an answer. He simply says, 'MINX, perhaps contracted from minnichen, which see.' On turning to minnichen, he tells us that it is from 'monacha, a nun,' 'whereof,' says Somner, 'our modern *minnichen* *lasse* for a

demure, neat, and spruce wench!’ But a Minx is certainly something different from a demure nun. It is a young lady with too much self-possession by half, and much more than her due allowance of affectation. We suspect that Minx is the irregular feminine of Swell, and that they are brother and sister by birth and education—(the *Ululans tumescens* of Linnæus.)


But let us not be too hard upon the poor minx and swell. This vice of affectation, of which they possess so distinguished a quantity, is common to man, and all that can be accomplished by most persons is to get rid of its worst excesses and manifestations. The tendency to put on an appearance which does not properly belong to us, but to somebody else—to borrow and wear some other person’s apparel—to imitate clumsily the manners and speech of individuals or classes above us, is very common in the wide world. Our ancestors were guilty of it. Tacitus relates of the ancient Germans that many of them delighted

in flaying a great dead enemy, and then wearing the lower part of his skin for pantaloons, and the upper part for a jerkin. A somewhat similar passion pervades the modern world. Think how the English aristocracy have first conquered the French and then copied their phrases and manners. And how are improvements to be effected except by folks imitating what they admire. Infancy and early life make progress, at first, almost wholly by imitation. Every mind in youth adopts *this* idea, which it considers fine, from one person, *that* mode of speech, or form of behaviour, which it thinks more or less illustrious, from another; and it is not until after some years have elapsed, the number differing in different cases, that anyone quite outlives the instinct of the chameleon, and attains a fixed unalterable colour of his own. Everyone probably retains up to mature life some qualities, outward or inward, which were originally derived by sympathetic imitation from that more powerful and more

definitely marked character with which he was associated in the season of youth.

Still there is a manner which is natural and proper to each human person, whether in youth or age, a manner amidst all changes and improvements which becomes them better than any other ; and all who are familiar with an individual are perfectly well acquainted with that manner and resent unnatural deviations from it. Certainly it is very delightful to associate with folks who are thoroughly genuine and unaffected in their speech and behaviour: Nothing is more enchanting than to converse with sprightly young people who can afford to be quite natural in their talk and conduct ; and even old people make very good company, if they are 'not stuck-up, and dressed in other men's clothes.

But, my dear young lady, borrowed garments seldom fit, and it inflicts pain on the reflective mind to be compelled to converse with a minx, or to watch her artificial way of taking her position in society. It is really a



grievous spectacle to see a human damsel done up for company, 'regardless of expense,' and entering the arena without one single expression of face, or utterance of tongue, or gesture of the body, genuine and natural. It is positively provoking—pardon the strength of the phrase—to watch the evolutions of that mass of animated buckram during an evening entertainment. Those lovely smiles, performed with so much sweetness, and borrowed from some admired model in smiling, form a remarkable contrast with the aspect of the mouth when sunk in ordinary domestic expression, with only her mother, or brothers and sisters, to please or propitiate. That springing walk and 'prancing gait' (as poor Albert Smith used to call it) is a fine exchange from the daily style of humdrum promenading. How beautiful it would be to see this noble company-kangaroo-jump performed at every movement by one's own fire-side!

And then the piano-playing and singing!

My dear young lady, favour us once more with that delicious piece of execution in which the fingers and wrist gesticulate with such exquisite simplicity. Repeat that song in which you express so completely your genuine character for purity or tenderness. Prolong the charming hours of conversation in which you cause everyone to feel that you have succeeded in eradicating the last fibre of old-fashioned girlish diffidence, and possess a soul which is a match for everybody, with a tongue which no man can tame. Renew to us the sublime pleasure of seeing you outshine the poor girl who sits near you, and who has no power of making herself felt in society beside your golden coruscation of self-confident wit and *persiflage*. The poor wretch so simply dressed, with an air so quiet, so modest, and so genuine, has no chance beside you ; except in the estimation of men who are not swells—and of women who are not minxes or fools.

But who by preaching can reform a minx ?
Like that figure of an Egyptian priestess in

the glass case at the British Museum, made up of dry bones and glued linen cloths,—you may unroll her for the amusement of the public, but you cannot change her nature, which is only a dead skeleton of unreality folded around with the words, and manners, and artifices, which she has elaborately gathered by copying other people's ideas, and by pretending to be something which she is not,—and never will be.

But shalt thou, O Swell! leave the party, unsaluted by the voice which has rendered homage to your delightful sister? You are nearly twenty years of age, and I stand fixed to the ground in silent contemplation of the attainments which adorn your character and form. Lost in wonder and reverie, I wander back to the times when a young man in company retained something of the bashfulness which was, no doubt, a relic of barbarism; when he addressed a man, of twice or thrice his age, in a tone which seemed a slight recog-

dition of possibly superior knowledge or position, and which was thought in those savage times to add a grace to the intercourse between younger and elder men. But now behold the admirable advance of intelligence! Thou, O Swell, art a king of kings! and thine air, with thine hands in thy peg-top pockets,* is one before which grey heads may well bow with astonishment and veneration. That serene self-confidence, that easy assumption of equality or superiority in tone, that grand repose of manner based on the assurance of a faultless 'getting up' in point of costume,—that glorious ability to talk up to the level of any knowledge, or of any talent,—that perfect facility of assertion, that roué air of an exhaustive experience of life, are not those sublime qualifications, up to which old men and maidens look with despairing admiration! What chance, with any sensible girl, in comparison with thee, has that poor fellow at thy elbow, who is positively bumpkin enough to

* Referring to the style of the period in the nether extremities.

talk as if he were really not quite out of his teens, not quite out of his articles, or his terms, or his classes, or his apprenticeship—and who sometimes says ‘Sir,’ when speaking to a bald-head, or a clergyman. Alas, I fear that with many of the young ladies he has no chance at all; for one foolish person has a natural chemical affinity for another, and you will see that a swell always goes to church at last with a minx for his life’s companion.

And look at them after they are married. The inveterate vice of affectation, of resolving to seem something greater or better than they are, will pursue them to the suburb where they settle on returning from their wedding tour. The plain style of last century is out of date, the very builders of ‘villas’ anticipate their necessities. There is no respectable floor or flat to be had by these young beginners. The pretentious semi-grand front of their detached abode is a fitting frontispiece to the interior, where the stucco of the outer wall is answered by the flashy gilding

and veneer of the inside. The income of the clerk or young tradesman assumes, on a miniature scale, all the social forms and responsibilities of nine or twelve hundred a-year. The dress, the living, the reception of company, must all be arranged in shabby imitation of something much more imposing; the appearance must be kept up, on which the social position of a swell depends in the universe of swells. The collector may call in vain for the poor-rates, or the gas, or the water-bill; and the miserable butcher and baker may sicken of hope deferred; but meantime have they not 'gloried in appearance,' and shone for a little time with a tinsel light which was pleasant while it lasted, if somewhat sad on the review,—yes, very sad in the review, for an old swell and an old minx, are two of the most melancholy objects on which the sun's rays, or the beams of conscience, can fall from pole to pole. And we see more than a few of them every day in the ranks of the public.

CHAPTER III.


ON THE LOVE OF FLOWERS.

As there are duties which we owe to intelligent and sentient beings possessed of the higher forms of life, so there are little duties which we owe to flowering plants and evergreens. They are alive, and therefore they are our cousins a thousand times removed, and are not to be treated as inorganic stocks and stones. They are entitled to a wholly different order of feeling from that which we vouchsafe to salts and minerals. They have scarcely any mind, perhaps none at all, though some of them look as if they dimly knew that they were beautiful, and were thankful for it; but, just as we are kind to babies, who do not appreciate the tenderness and love bestowed upon them, so should we 'consider' these humble relations of ours with admiration—so should we delight in their beaming counte-

nances, and make a point of associating them with our domestic and interior existence.

I once held a disputation with a 'Plymouth Brother,' who told me that the flowers were all cursed, with the 'ground,' since the rebellion of our First Parents in Paradise; and that it was a sinful weakness to take delight in creatures on whose head rested the anathema of heaven. I have often wondered since—for this was twenty years ago—whether that 'eminently pious' man really believed what he professed;—so that, when he looked upon a cursed violet, or anemone, or moss-rose bud, or upon a doubly-cursed carnation, cultivated by art and man's device, he saw little 'vessels of wrath,' and was veritably unable to receive the impression of innocence and beauty which they make on all other beholders. How hateful is the hard doctrinal superstition which thus throws a cloud over nature, and blights with its mist of darkness all the brightness of the world.


Truly it is a blessing, and not a curse, which



rests upon their heads ! Imagine all the flowers over the globe to be rooted up in one night, so that they should bloom around man's path never-more. It would be a night much more 'to be remembered' than when the pride of Egypt died ; and ever afterwards the world would be little better than a waste howling wilderness. No more the golden expanse of daffodils should then deck the steep banks of the Wye, beside whose blue waters this 'brother'-man uttered his darkling heresy ; no more the gold and silver shower of buttercups and daisies enamel the dewy pasture-lands of Breinton, on which the morning sunbeams dance in spring ; no more those wondrous worlds of beauty overwhelm the eye in the great flower-shows of the London summer ; no more the snow-white Camellia shine, like Hesperus, in the maiden's hair at eventide ; no more the geraniums and their many-coloured sisterhood lighten in scarlet beds over our gardens and lawns !

It is better not to imagine any such thing

whatever. Get thee gone, injurious thought, for the flowers are blooming in a world that has been long ago redeemed ; and the man who does not love them is 'like the beasts which perish.' Love them ! Yes, they have sprung from the unfathomable depths of the eternal beauty and benevolence of God. The idea of each bloomed in His Mind from eternity past. To Him the image of the 'Forget-me-not,' with its innocent blue eye beside the glittering streams of England, seemed delightful, ages before England was upheaved from the mighty deep. Before that Unsearchable One, the marvellous cones of the white and the scarlet azalea lifted their towering splendours in creative vision long 'before they grew.' To Him, the carpet of wild hyacinth, covering, along with its inlaid stellaria, the shady floors of our woods and forests, was a thought as ancient as that of the blue and starry heaven which it resembles. He had 'considered the lilies' for an eternity before Solomon flourished in his pride. And there-



fore we may say that a love of flowers is a specially god-like passion, raising us above the earth to its Author. May we not even venture to say, rather, that these frail material forms of beauty are but the thin and unsubstantial coverings which veil the beautiful ideas beneath, so that, in communing with them, we draw very nigh to the all-creating Omnipotence.

The more innocent people are, the more they love flowers. You cannot fancy a thoroughly bad man really and properly loving anything so pure as a lily of the valley with its silver bells shining among the greenest leaves in England. It is impossible to go into a passion while you are looking at it. It exerts a direct and positive influence on the character. The lily is the express emblem of angelic purity. You cannot look at it while you are sinning. It is a visible thought of the pure Spirit of Love. Its raiment is white as the light. It reminds you of all that is immaculate in the creation, of the Paradise of

God. It breathes a spiritual poetry around it, and assists the ascension of the soul to its eternal home. But not the lily only can act the angel's part towards you. If you can bring from Paris but a small globe of glass set on a gilded filagree tripod, fill it with clear water, and place therein, in fitting order, a few clean bright ivy leaves, a few red flowers of the nasturtium, some corals of the mountain-ash, a stalk or two of the harebell, and a little wreath of the periwinkle, you have before you, in the white centre of your breakfast tablecloth, a picture which will give a festive air to the whole party, and shed a light on the 'whole house in which you are sitting.' These flowers and leaves will repay your kindness in inviting them to your human society; they will make you more human, not to say divine.

But perhaps you are a man 'caring for none of these things,' a Gallio towards Nature, who would drive the whole world of flowers away from before your judgment-seat, unwilling to be vexed with questions of botanical 'words'

and of vegetable 'law.' You consider that the middle of the breakfast-table is wanted for the bread. You are not a man who will ever carry a stalk of geranium, or even a little bunch of fragrant lavender, to town in your button-hole. You wretched fellow, I know just what your countenance is like! You have not a favourite plant or tree on all your premises. You will sit for days and weeks in your study or your counting-house, with not a single blossom to fling its sweetness on the desert dusty air, or to raise your grovelling thought upward to the realms of beauty. You never spend a penny upon the violet-girls, or carry home a nosegay to your wife and children. And when you 'give a party,' I know full well that not one single azalea is invited to enter and illuminate your drawing-room. Gilding and gimcracks, bad pictures and gas-burners, you have without end; but not even a primrose in a flower-pot, or a box of crocuses.

And this is the sort of person who thinks

that it is 'popish' to dress the church with flowers at Easter, or with evergreens at Christmas—who supposes that the Protestant religion is in danger if holly and laurel are hung around to symbolize the birth of Life into a world of death, or if a great resplendent nosegay is set in summer in the midst of the congregation. The sooner that kind of Protestant religion vanishes, the better. Let it be suffocated with laurels and rose-leaves, and receive its dismissal beneath a heap of lavender and rosemary. One of the finest things that can happen to a false religion, in order to ensure its grasp upon the popular mind, is that it should be thoroughly united with the world of trees and flowers; and it is also one of the finest things that can happen to a religion that is true. The 'groves' on the mountain-side were the strongholds of Paganism in Syria. The 'crown of flowers' was the attraction to Samaritan heathenism for the drunkards of Ephraim. The popular superstitions of south Europe seem to be a part

of nature, because they grow up in a setting of greenness and beauty.

I was recently drawn by some good fairy to pay a visit to the church and churchyard of Stoke Pogis, within distant view of Eton towers, where Gray wrote his *Elegy* (perhaps the best-known and best-loved 'copy of verses' in the English language), in the neighbourhood of which he passed his youth, and where he lies buried in the same tomb with his mother and his aunt Mary Antrobus. The country round is a little world of green fields and hedgerows as far as the eye can reach, stretching into uplands, and dotted all over with clumps and avenues of elms. The old beeches of the Manor of Stoke border three sides of the spacious churchyard; the fourth, guarded by a low iron railing, being quite open, and facing, against the southern sun, a kind of park. Towards the further end stands the church—a battlemented tower, clothed with well-kept ivy to the top, whence springs a graceful hexagonal spire into the sky; the

body of the building, of decayed freestone, with mullioned windows, supports two 'old red' barn-like roofs, side by side, the greater part of which, as well as the walls, are also covered with the ivy. An ancient side-porch of open timber-work, with worn brick pavement, confronts a pair of enormous yews which spread a solemn shade over a company of altar-tombs, seeming to guard them from generation to generation. In front of this combination of art and nature, and all beyond at the hinder portion of the lovingly-tended space, there protected by the lofty overshadowing trees, the 'rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep' in grassy graves—the 'village Hampdens,' the 'mute inglorious Miltons,' whom the poet has commemorated in those strains which have sunk into the heart of England.

The last century epitaphs still cast on behalf of the dead many 'a longing, lingering look behind' on 'the warm precincts of the cheerful day;' and the shadowing shroud of

and of vegetable 'law.' You consider that the middle of the breakfast-table is wanted for the bread. You are not a man who will ever carry a stalk of geranium, or even a little bunch of fragrant lavender, to town in your button-hole. You wretched fellow, I know just what your countenance is like! You have not a favourite plant or tree on all your premises. You will sit for days and weeks in your study or your counting-house, with not a single blossom to fling its sweetness on the desert dusty air, or to raise your grovelling thought upward to the realms of beauty. You never spend a penny upon the violet-girls, or carry home a nosegay to your wife and children. And when you 'give a party,' I know full well that not one single azalea is invited to enter and illuminate your drawing-room. Gilding and gimcracks, bad pictures and gas-burners, you have without end; but not even a primrose in a flower-pot, or a box of crocuses.

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for business, or for church. The only plan of being safe must have been to arrive half-an-hour too soon.

But now clocks are multiplied in every direction; churches, exchanges, market-places, railway stations, watchmakers' shops, all offer to the poorest people opportunities of knowing the time within a few minutes of exactness; and perhaps five out of ten watches may be depended on, especially if they are cleaned now and then, to give a general notion of the time of day to their wearers and possessors. It may be said that at last there is no real excuse for people being systematically unpunctual in their engagements. The creation offers an eternal spectacle of punctuality to the senses of rational beings; and it is part of a valuable character to be depended on to the minute.

Yet many of our contemporaries are still no better than barbarians in this respect; they show no improvement on the habits of antiquity; you would judge that they


reckoned by the sun, or by the cat's eye, or that they had an old sun-dial, which was useless on a cloudy day,—they are never right even to half-an-hour. A good watch, with compensation balance, has a tendency to render its wearer, like itself, a sound time-keeper,—but these unfortunate persons never seem to know within nearly half-an-hour what o'clock it is.

It is some assistance to punctuality to find out the people who keep accurate time in their movements. I know successive sets of church-goers, whose position on the high road on Sundays is an infallible index of the number of minutes it wants to the 'hour of prayer;' and looking at them answers the same purpose as looking at the dial on the church tower. I also know a number of persons, whose position on the high road on Sunday mornings is quite a different 'sign of the times.' The bells have all stopped, the admirable appeal to the 'dearly beloved brethren' has everywhere begun, but these

worshippers are still far from their desired haven. They probably belong to households where the mother is something of a muddler, where the Sunday is regarded as a day of lawful disorder by the servants, where breakfast is a meal of uncertain epoch and duration—and where, consequently, there is no fixed canon for the time of dressing and starting for church, enforced with determination by the heads of the establishment. Hence the family dawdles, when it ought to be brushing its hats, or adjusting its resplendent bonnet strings; the clocks are very likely not wound up, and are keeping Sabbath by doing no manner of work: and the result is, that the little band of badly regulated worshippers steals up the aisle with hurried footsteps, and drooping heads, nearly always many minutes after the service has commenced.

If all the parsons in the kingdom were to make an example, by general agreement, of these habitual defaulters on some fine Sunday morning, it would be a just retribution for

their offence. Each minister might order a halt in the progress of the service, as a noble file of late arrivers was moving up the central passage of the church, and address them in some such words as these: 'What! is it nothing to you, that you show this habitual disregard of punctuality in relation to *the chief engagement of the week*, your appearance for worship before the throne of Heaven? Is it nothing to you that you deprive yourself of the delight of a prepared and serene spirit at the commencement of Divine Service? Is it nothing to you, that you thus, Sunday after Sunday, do your utmost to disturb the devotions of the rest of the congregation, when you know that in a busy age, the work of lifting up the soul to the Unseen is of all others the most arduous, and demands quietness and order? Is it because you have no watches by which to learn the time, or because you are too slothful to rise when you know that God summons you to His presence, or because your whole scheme of house govern-



ment is a tangle and a chaos, or because you have no fear of God or love of man before your eyes, that you thus enter the church heated and hurried, presenting as your offering a disturbance which does its utmost to confound the whole assembly! And now retire shame-stricken to your seats, 'rebuked before all;' and for ever after plan your journey to the house of God so that, seated and silent, you shall be ready to rise for the holy text, or to kneel in prayer, when the officiating minister invites you to begin.


'In every family there will occasionally occur disturbing incidents over which there can be no control, and which may occasion late arrival at church; and when you have obtained a character for punctuality, you will obtain also from the whole congregation this charitable construction of any rare instance of default. But not till then! Until you are habitually punctual, you shall be regarded as habitual disturbers of the most holy service of your God.'

We should imagine that some such discourse as this, delivered with an alarming directness of commination, would make the ears of several tens of thousands to tingle on that selected Sunday, and for some months afterwards cause the churches to present a different aspect on the cessation of the bell.

CHAPTER V.


ON THE DUTY OF DELIVERING KIND MESSAGES.

EVERY day many millions of kind messages are sent to absent friends in all countries through persons who are about to visit them—some *vivâ voce*, and some by letter. Of these messages but a small proportion are ever delivered, and still fewer with the reality and *empressement* which would render them agreeable to the receivers. Nearly all the messages committed to boys for delivery may be considered to be completely thrown away. The warmest expressions of love or friendship they regard as partaking so much of the weakness, or tall talk, to which grown-up people are addicted, for lack of something better to occupy their time, that it never occurs to them as deserving of a moment's effort to retain or to repeat such unmitigated 'palaver.' You may have apportioned and graduated your expres-



sions of regard with the nicest attention to the fitness of things as between persons respected or beloved : it is all the same, it may be asserted that no boy ever yet correctly delivered, for its own sake, a message of affection, civility, or esteem. He gives your 'love' to an alderman, or your 'kind regards' to the postman or the tax collector. Such commissions belong to a sphere of delicate relationships unknown to these heroes of prisoner's base and the cricket-field.

Yet kind messages have a grand part to discharge in the system of utterances and acts by which the reign of love is maintained and advanced in so hard a world. As soon as we have passed beyond the limits of school into the real world, we find that it is sweet to be remembered with regard by friends at a distance—to learn that you have not faded out of their memory like unfixed photographs in the sunshine,—that you are sufficiently a distinct object of regard to be found worthy of a direct and affectionate salutation. The mes-



sages to individual Christians, written at the end of S. Paul's Epistles, have always appeared to me to be full of beauty, and full of exemplary affection to the end of time. The nobler the man, the more distinct are his sympathies, the more personal his regards, the more firm his friendships ; and to have earned by active service a place in the long catalogue of names remembered with honour by an apostle argued a purity of life to which a direct message from so divine a person would afford the keenest satisfaction. It was next to the honour of having their names inscribed on a loftier memory.

And what should we have thought of that Church which considered these apostolic salutations, so full of tenderness, propriety, and godly zeal, unworthy of public reading in the assembly, or which treated them as a postscript whose contents were not deserving of the same honour with the rest of the epistle ? If it yields us pleasure to find that friends now upside-down at the antipodes remember us,

and mention our names when years have passed with animated regard in their letters from the ends of the earth, what must have been the pleasure given by the discovery that Paul, who had been 'caught up into Paradise,' and who was a 'prisoner' for the Gospel, had not forgotten those who had formerly laboured with him in his mission work, or ministered to his necessities? Now, although we can hope neither to give nor to receive messages in our day so valuable as his, yet just in proportion to the intelligence and goodness of the inter-changing parties is the worth of similar modern expressions of regard. Every such message is a flash of sunbeams from a luminous soul towards a brother in the distance; or, to speak in another figure, kind messages are the golden rivets which help to hold together the splintered vase of human sympathies. A little more genius and earnestness in devising them, and a little more diligence in delivering them, would materially increase the sum of daily happiness. The heavenly joy will consist of

a few great loves and of an infinity of lesser affections. Nothing is sweeter than the sense of being loved ; and when we shall be loved by an innumerable company of acquaintances, happiness will be complete. Whatever diminishes the sense of isolation, or causes the soul to feel the links that bind it to all saints, may be considered as a solid accession to our pleasure, and prelude to the eternal joy. The regard of good men can be realised on earth only by its utterance, and he who is charged with the expression of a friend's attachment, or of a brother's or a father's, or a mother's love, and omits to deliver the message, is unfaithful to a little trust which is nevertheless weightier than that of small gold or silver.



CHAPTER VI.

ON THE DUTY OF SPEAKING AND READING DISTINCTLY.

THE reporter of a recent conference at Geneva closed his account of the assembly with the following reflection :—

‘There is one point, certainly, in regard to which the members of the Conference from England may advantageously take a lesson from their Continental brethren. I refer to the subject of elocution. Nearly all the foreign speakers have exhibited an elocutionary power of no mean order, have spoken clearly and distinctly without being distressingly loud, and have never fallen into the monotonous style of address to which unfortunately the English pulpit and platform are by no means strangers. Even the long written addresses have been delivered with a spirit, a variety of intonation and emphasis, and a power of diction that have altogether relieved them of that dulness which is sometimes considered inseparable from such discourses.’

Reproof, like a suit of clothes, must always

be measured in order to fit ; and there is one deduction from the sum of the Continental Brethren's merits which must be made, before we can with exact justice either establish the charge or found the exhortation. This deduction is that which must be set down to the innate qualities of different races of men.


Whatever is a special gift of nature ought not to be reckoned in the category of art. Now, when the chief speakers are of predominantly Celtic blood, we believe the superiority of elocution will always be found on the side of the Celts. The public eloquence of any country is only the finest form of its common discourse, and none who know France and England will deny that the French are incomparably finer talkers than ourselves. A Frenchman has generally a larger mouth than an Englishman ; he is more disposed to open his mouth ; and when he opens it he has a language to speak that invites him to keep it open. The construction of French words, and particularly the quality of its vowel sounds,

tends to that full extension of the lips and jaws which is the first and fundamental requisite to distinct and pleasant speech.

The French live also in a purer air than ourselves, under a sky less clouded and in an atmosphere less damp. In England and Scotland it usually either rains, or is going to rain; and the insensible effect of this climate upon the population is, if we may theorise like Mr. Buckle, to induce them to keep their mouths shut, to guard the bronchial passages from the damp and cold. There is amongst us an eternal prevalence of rheums. Each of us has two or three bad colds every year. The throat and the larynx hence acquire a constitutional huskiness throughout the nation. The delicate quality of the vocal chords beneath the epiglottis suffers in nearly all Englishmen. There is a flat dull sound in the voice of England, which arises from this physical cause. It is a great people, but it has not a musical organ of speech. The sound of the national voice is a good deal

like that of revolving millstones. It is deficient in ring, in vigour, in melody. It resembles the effect of a reed mouthpiece, and sometimes of a comb and paper, rather than the clear intonation of a horn or a fiddle.


But listen to the French, both men and women. What a perfect mastery of the *throat* as well as the lips and tongue! The Gallic larynx is habitually clear. It vibrates, and tinkles, and rings incessantly like the great copper cow-bells on the Swiss mountains. It is like a horn, full of precision and force. It is like a violin, which responds distinctly to every stroke of a skilful player, from deep bass up to almost impossible squeaks and shrill shrieks in F and G among the ledger-lines above the stave. Listen to them in the train, on the Boulevards, in their shops and homes; how they pour out their language from their very hearts; not stifling their words, as we do, but saying at every sentence, 'Our mouth is open towards you—our heart is enlarged!' Truly the French



throat is a wonderful organ—not, indeed, expressive of any exquisite inner life, but capable of pouring out a life-long torrent of clear, sharp, and not unpleasant sounds.


Add to this the nature and genius of the people, ten times more demonstrative in every way than ourselves. A Briton puts into action the smallest number of muscles that can possibly be employed in the service of speech. Generally it is the mouth alone which operates, and if the mouth were covered it could scarcely be learned from the rest of the body whether he were speaking or silent. But both the body and soul of a Frenchman talk. His whole face and head, his shoulders, spine, and trunk, his arms, hands, and feet, all take part in his discourse. He is great in action, the chief part of popular oratory. The muscles of his visage are a company of actors—comic performers in vaudeville among the commonalty—tragic and pathetic among the refined and good. Every sentence comes to you enforced by all that the body can do to assist the utterances of the soul.

Several consonants also signify much more in France than they do in England. The *R* is itself a power from Calais to Geneva. It rolls and trills and runs everywhere around with a vigour which imparts to it wholly a new life among the nations. The nose also takes a part in discourse unknown among ourselves ; the nasals keep up an accompaniment to the general strain of the liveliest description, imparting altogether a new and startling element into the national eloquence ; so that, what with eyebrows working in every direction, eyes rolling and flashing, face and chin in perpetual motion, hands and feet and trunk assisting the demonstration, and this backed by an inborn love of talking for talking's sake, and a capacity for making a fine speech about anything or nothing at all, it is not to be wondered at that when the national predisposition to discourse is cultivated and governed by a refined education, the result is an oratory every way superior to the half-suppressed series of grunts which serve




the Teutonic races as a means of communication.

To talk well, a nation must love talking, and the French love it to distraction. It is their life, far more than thinking. A Frenchman who is quite at his ease in a country town, and who finds his companions have left him alone in the *salle-a-manger*, will almost commence an oration to his decanter sooner than sit silent and still. By travelling on the Continent we become sensible what subterranean floods of French speech are laid on, as it were, in vast pipes of supply all around, and you have but to turn it on, and scarcely that, when you are deluged with a fountain, a cataract, a geyser of conversation, from which there is no escape, and for which there is no remedy but patience. Besides, these good allies pay far more attention to the art of talking their own language than is ever dreamed of in English schools. The very peasantry and *ouvriers* have a precise idea of the force of words, which would astonish and



bewilder an English artizan, while among the educated classes the art of composing brilliant French sentences, and uttering them, is one which is never relinquished but in their coffins. And it is a wonder that they don't go on with it there.

Now all this is utterly foreign to the German and the English nature. So far from loving talking for its own sake, most of us regard it as somewhat of a bother to have to speak at all. Anything for a quiet life. We are a melancholy, ruminant people, and spare our words. We are not a social nation—on the surface not, perhaps, an amiable one. It is said that English gentlemen even pass one another, sometimes without a word, in the desert of Petra, if they have never been introduced. It is better proved that, at a *table d'hôte* the English will frequently sit in silence, suspicious of one another's title to be spoken to. At home we are not much more eloquent. The construction of common English conversation is meagre in the extreme. There




is little variety, little resource in expression, no composition, and no unction. There is a prevailing impression that attention to the art of speech is superficial, pedantic, and therefore unworthy the expenditure of effort. There is a lack of muscular exertion in common discourse in the strongest nation in the world, as if it were too much trouble to move thoroughly such a trumpery set of sinews as those which direct the action of the organs of speech and sound. Hence, a flat, monotonous series of explosions rather than utterances—a number of short, dull-sounding sentences, is all you hear from the generality of British conversers. The want of national enthusiasm, the extreme fewness of the subjects which can inflame an Englishman's heart, the hard-kindling nature of the British bosom, like the inland coal of the country, the habit of suppressing his opinions on the most important subjects, for fear of offending the prejudices of his neighbour, and, perhaps, a really manly indisposition to talk for ever of trifles—all combine to shut an

Englishman's mouth, and, when opened, to close it as soon as possible again. Hence it is that, while a French *café* is full of jabbering Gauls, an English chop-house is full of silent Britons. The one is a nation of fluent and interesting speakers, as Cæsar described some of their ancestors long ago, the other a nations of husky, reserved, and rather dry thinkers.


Now since, as we have said, cultivated eloquence in any country is only an improved form of the common national discourse, what chance have our preachers of rivalling the French, or men of French descent, in the particulars referred to, of '*spirit, variety, and intonation?*' These are certain to gain the crown of 'eloquence.' Our platform and pulpit orators are certain to be predominantly English—that is, husky, inartificial, and monotonous, to the end of the chapter. And a sad pity it is; for our men have something to say quite as well worth distinctly hearing as the bulk of that French *causerie*, and artificial

logic and pathos, which forms so large an element in the literature and eloquence of our neighbours. This is a subject which demands far more attention than it receives both in our colleges and our congregations. We cannot, indeed, hope to change the attributes of the English nature, to render our students and ministers vivacious and demonstrative, to alter the quality of the English voice,—which is, in most cases, essentially opposed to musical and attractive discourse,—or to overthrow the mental habits of English assemblies, who would think a man mad that attempted to work upon their feelings by the transparent artifices which delight and enthrall a French congregation. But still much might be done to improve our ‘eloquence.’ A man might decline, like Demosthenes, to fill his mouth so full of pebbles as to enlarge its cavity, distend its muscles, and facilitate its opening; but no man ought to be permitted to ascend desk or platform without being warned, by an officer placed at the foot of the tribune for the pur-



pose, to open well his obstinate English jaws, closing for ever in the mumbles of tetanus. To say nothing of platform speaking, we are persuaded that improvement in this particular alone, in the generality of preachers, would impart a wholly new interest to their reading of the Bible and to the delivery of their sermons. This distinctness of pronunciation is a matter of art, and not of nature or character. A somewhat foolish man may learn to articulate with precision : and when a wise man learns it, he will convey his wisdom with ten-fold force. But the condition of this acquisition is practice, and even solitary reading aloud is better than no practice at all.

For the rest, the effect of oratory on the English nature depends upon its being genuine in feeling, solid in argument, and pathetic in its deeper strains ; and no artificial preparation can communicate these powers in the absence of spiritual gifts. The chief powers of sacred 'oratory' are derived from the inmost region of the soul, and not from the organs of the




body. Let a man *be* genuine, *be* thoroughly in earnest, *be* possessed with the spirit of love and wisdom, and even an Englishman's husky voice will melt, his monotonous national tone will waver into emotion, and, if he open his mouth well, he will produce an effect on his audience as deep, as real, and as practical, if not so animating and brilliant, as that which attends the exercises of the Celtic eloquence.

CHAPTER VII.

ON KEEPING SECRETS.


THERE are several influences at work in this age tending to make it more difficult to keep a secret than it was in former days. There is less dignity and reserve in personal character, less solemnity of demeanour, there is freer talking, and more of it, than in the times of our fathers. There is also a more audacious curiosity abroad, which receives its typical development in America. There is more publicity in the press. And we believe it might be added, that there is less conscience than aforetime in guarding sacredly that which has been learned under a promise of secrecy. It is perfectly wonderful how easily people will promise 'not to mention' something which they have heard under this seal, and then immediately afterwards divulge the information to the first intimate friend



whom they may encounter. There are numbers of folks whose promise 'not to tell,' is equivalent to a solemn engagement to publish in all companies the 'secret' of which they have been made the depository.

Much of the comfort of life depends upon ascertaining by experience who are trustworthy and who are not—who are conductors, and who are non-conductors. Sometimes a man may be trusted, when his wife is a terrible blab; or *vice versâ*, the wife is safe, while the husband is wholly destitute of reticence. When people are married, it is usually requisite to be assured of both parties, for in most cases nothing will put a stop to conjugal confidence and curiosity. This greatly limits the area of security. And indeed, the 'company' that can keep secrets will always be 'limited.'


Hence follow two excellent rules: 1. 'Have as few secrets as possible;' and 2. 'If you are compelled to have a few, keep them yourself.' There is little pleasure in a life spent



in trying to keep many secrets. There are some whose chief delight consists in living among a crowd, knowing things of which the multitude are ignorant. They are full of mysterious hints of a higher intelligence; they peep, and wink, and mutter, like witches and wizards. Their delight is in a cloud of mystery, out of which they dart occasional flashes of knowledge which win the admiration of their adherents. But it is not well to possess too much of this special information. One does not envy a Roman Priest who is always receiving into his bosom an increase of the terrible knowledge acquired in confession, and sealed there under penalty of perdition. The highest character delights in openness rather than in reserve. 'All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' There are not many things of which a wise man would wish secrets to be made. Live so that the appearance reveals the reality. Let no mask of 'profession' cover an inward life of dishonesty. Let all


be open and above-board. Engage in no conspiracies. Be entangled in no malicious coteries. Yield yourself to no dishonourable commercial or literary adventure. Speak evil of no man. Think and act so that there shall be as little as possible to conceal from public view. Let the light of heaven play freely through a transparent character.

Still there are many things in life which come to the knowledge even of a man most resolved against secret information, and which it is his duty to keep as secrets from others. Matters affecting character unfavourably ought not to be mentioned, unless there be some special reason obliging the communication of them to persons of the same community. Nothing ought to be conceded to the burglarious spirit of idle curiosity in either male or female. There are people whose delight it is to pick locks, to apply the centre-bit of their undisciplined desire for secret knowledge, to extract information intended to be hidden; to such no quarter should be granted.



You may generally reckon the measure of unfaithfulness by the intensity of this curiosity. He who readily seeks to break the seal of secrecy readily betrays the secret so learned.

And a much more serious business in society ought to be made, than is now common, of the crime of social treachery. Let a person, proved to have repeated matters delivered under a promise of concealment, be marked on the forehead with a brand which will effectually consolidate the confidence of the neighbourhood. But the main lesson after all is this—that if you have a secret to keep, you should keep it yourself, for there are few more effectual methods of advertising anything than to communicate it under a pledge of concealment to the ordinary members of any human society. You will thus become at once your own secretary and your own treasurer, and whatever mischances occur in your affairs, you will not be troubled with the jar of broken or dishonoured confidences.



CHAPTER VIII.


ON VENTILATING HOUSES AND CHURCHES.

THE only speech that Sir Isaac Newton is reported to have made in Parliament, was to request that some one in the gallery would open the window. And it was a great speech, worthy of the discoverer of the true system of the universe.

A love of fresh air, as the source of good spirits, deserves to be reckoned among the virtues, along with a love of spring-water and clean habiliments. A careful instruction in the depressing deadly qualities of carbonic acid ought to form a prominent lesson in every successive stage of a public education. For the want of this, what vile atmospheres are breathed by night and day by multitudes throughout these islands! The manufacturing populations deliberately shut themselves up in mills, floor over floor, reeking with the

exhalations of hundreds of workers, and no amount of exhortation on the part of their employers can persuade them to admit the air of heaven. The fashionable world subjects itself every night during the season to almost equally pestilential influences in drawing-rooms and places of entertainment. The crowded work-rooms of the Metropolis are filled with seamstresses and milliners, who will, if they can, close fast every entrance for the breath of life, and annually some of them die stifled by their own folly and neglect.

The religious public are little better than the world. Few are the churches and chapels where ventilation is practised with even tolerable success, or where churchwardens and deacons are acquainted with the laws of life. Every one has seen public meetings packed in rooms where, in addition to the defiling influence of the presence of hundreds of human beings exhaling carbon at every breath, there are dozens of gas-lamps, each one steadily pouring into the air a stream of soot, (as any-



one would discover who would for a minute hold over a single burner the white-underface of an earthenware plate)—yet in these rooms there were no provisions either for the escape of the foul air or the entrance of the fresh.

When will it be understood that there is no influence more depressing to the forces of life than to breathe in the gases rejected from the human system, or those which are disengaged in the combustion of carburetted hydrogen? When will it be understood, that it is not sufficient to open an egress aloft for the impure air, but that provision must be made in the basement for the moderate access of fresh air from the surrounding atmosphere. In the greater number of living and sleeping rooms, there are no such provisions whatever; the floor is covered with carpets, the windows and doors are tightly closed, the ceiling is destitute of apertures; and in such chambers dozens of people will sit, hour after hour, until the air is thoroughly saturated with the soot that emanates from the company and their chandeliers.

All the while the whole vegetable world is pouring forth fresh oxygen for their behoof, and heaven by an immutable law is commanding all men everywhere to breathe it.

A constant supply of fresh air has far more to do with good spirits, good temper, thankfulness, and the consequent enjoyment of daily life, than most persons imagine. An association for persuading mankind to ventilate their abodes, would deserve almost as much encouragement as an Early Closing Society, or a Band of Hope. A society for the diffusion of useful gases would be a worthy associate of the other philanthropic associations. Excess of carbon disposes to every grievous and gloomy superstition. Blessed is the man who bores a number of holes in the floors of churches by which communication can be opened with the outer atmosphere; and thrice blessed the sacristan who provides for the rise and escape of the columns of carbonic acid from the close packed throngs who fill the area and the galleries. The wakeful-

ness of congregations would be much promoted if the truth were more freely mixed with oxygen. Nothing, except dull sermons, makes men more sleepy than carbonic acid.

Blessed again is the man who contrives the ventilation of dinner and drawing-rooms ; and thrice and four times blessed the builder who arranges for the ventilation of a bed-room. There was a wise person who recently wrote a letter to the *Times*, in which he described a pipe which he had brought into his sleeping-room from the outer air, and which opened near his head with a mouth in the shape of a trumpet, and through which he supplied himself with oxygen during the hours of unconsciousness to the immense refreshment of his jaded system. Another writer described a contrivance for admitting air through a moveable window-pane working to and fro in a perforated frame. Let others come forward and detail their inventions in the same line. Only let not men shorten and embitter their lives by continuing to inhale that which is the

CHAPTER VII.


ON KEEPING SECRETS.

THERE are several influences at work in this age tending to make it more difficult to keep a secret than it was in former days. There is less dignity and reserve in personal character, less solemnity of demeanour, there is freer talking, and more of it, than in the times of our fathers. There is also a more audacious curiosity abroad, which receives its typical development in America. There is more publicity in the press. And we believe it might be added, that there is less conscience than aforetime in guarding sacredly that which has been learned under a promise of secrecy. It is perfectly wonderful how easily people will promise 'not to mention' something which they have heard under this seal, and then immediately afterwards divulge the information to the first intimate friend

whom they may encounter. There are numbers of folks whose promise 'not to tell,' is equivalent to a solemn engagement to publish in all companies the 'secret' of which they have been made the depository.

Much of the comfort of life depends upon ascertaining by experience who are trustworthy and who are not—who are conductors, and who are non-conductors. Sometimes a man may be trusted, when his wife is a terrible blab; or *vice versâ*, the wife is safe, while the husband is wholly destitute of reticence. When people are married, it is usually requisite to be assured of both parties, for in most cases nothing will put a stop to conjugal confidence and curiosity. This greatly limits the area of security. And indeed, the 'company' that can keep secrets will always be 'limited.'


Hence follow two excellent rules: 1. 'Have as few secrets as possible;' and 2. 'If you are compelled to have a few, keep them yourself.' There is little pleasure in a life spent



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which may be regarded as offering a sufficient excuse for a similar absence on the part of those whose homes are situated far from the Temple. But the present object is to assert, and we do so without much fear of honest contradiction, that in the large majority of cases of absence from church there is no sufficient cause either in illness or in the state of the weather—no cause which can be accounted sufficient by the angels, by the saints in heaven, or even by men of ordinary common-sense and resolution.

It is exceedingly curious to note what infinitesimal disorders in the health are, in a certain state of mind, accounted sufficient excuses for staying at home on Sunday—what very slight bronchial, or biliary or cerebral affections are reckoned of sufficient gravity to compel the neglect of Divine worship, public instruction and exhortation, and church communion. A slight cold, a trifling headache, a fit of ennui, a little pain in the finger or the side, which on Wednesday

morning would never for one single moment be permitted to stand in the way of a pic-nic, or on Wednesday evening of a concert or of company, is, on *Sunday* quite sufficient reason for not going forth to worship God, to 'hear His most Holy Word, or to ask for those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul.'

The weather, too, is subjected to a scrutiny on the weekly festival of Christ's resurrection to which it is not often exposed when there is nothing to be done but to gratify the passion for gain or for pleasure. The signs of the sky are examined with a stringent minuteness which is really admirable and exceptional. If there is occasion to say, 'There will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering,' it is added, 'and in consequence, we must dispense with the visit to the House of the Almighty.' It is not an exaggeration to declare that, with many people, the obligation to worship and to learn is measured by the condition of the atmo-




sphere. A pluviometer might register and determine their religious impulses. The hygrometer might detect on the Saturday the different shades of probability in favour of the attendance of the more delicate worshippers on the morrow. A preacher might predict, by consulting the proper instruments, who would listen on the Sunday to the discourse which he has prepared with so much anxiety for the welfare of his people.

This extreme delicacy of health on Sundays is both contemptible and discouraging. Let every person who feels tempted by heat or by cold, by rain or by wind, to refrain from contributing the invaluable gift of his *presence* to the congregation, ask himself, while the weather-devil is whispering in his ear,—Would this measure of dampness, or of heat, or of cold—would this position of the mercury on the face of either the barometer or the thermometer—hinder me from going to fulfil that engagement during this week which I like best?—would it hinder me from going

to visit this friend on the Monday, to assist at that dinner on the Tuesday, to be present at this regale of music and song on the Wednesday following? If it would not, let me say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; let me put on my thick gospel-sandals, and send for my 'cloak' from Troas, and take the road to the temple of my God.' Let me examine every headache, every sensation of weariness, and every excuse of attendance on a sick child or servant, by the same rule. Where my pleasures or my gains would be really hindered by the weather or by disease, there let a sufficient apology for absence from the Divine service be admitted; but where we propose to treat the worship of Almighty God on a principle on which we should not decide our conduct when only self or society is concerned, there let us recognise an indifference which requires 'sharp rebuke' for its correction or expulsion.


Then, again, there is dress. I have been informed that very recently, on one of the

fine but showery Sundays in May, five of the largest congregations in London were almost completely stripped of the fairer portion of their customary 'worshippers.' The cause was evident. These 'daughters of Zion' had just bought their blooming spring bonnets and other vernal adornments. The day, like its predecessors, was sufficiently like April to suggest caution; but the ladies of Jerusalem were not to be baulked of the pleasure of appearing in their 'bright apparel.' They were just dressing for church, when a slight shower came on. But, rather than put on less perishable head-dress or more suitable array, and venture forth with umbrella or other defences against rain, they gave way to their 'delicateness and tenderness,' and *all stayed at home*. Not one of them could adventure to set her foot to the ground. So much for religion, in comparison with a secular entertainment! At the last day these butterfly excuses for absence, drawn from changeable apparel, will not endure the judgment of Him



to whom 'all angels cry aloud.' In this manner did *not* the holy women of old adorn themselves when it was a question of sacrifice in the courts of Jehovah. That spirit of adoration cannot be exceedingly ardent whose flame can be extinguished by a shower of rain or by a little wind.

The general lesson to be drawn from these reflections is, that worship, like all good works, derives its value from its regularity, and requires effort, perseverance, sacrifice, in order to ensure it. 'Wind and weather permitting' is a proviso incident to all secular avocations. There are sometimes wind and weather which will not 'permit' of the execution of human purposes at the time announced for their completion. But *what* wind and weather is it that is reckoned sufficient to hinder the departure of a mail steamer or of a railway train? What is the violence of the tempest which detains travellers from the ocean, or men of business on the land? It is assuredly no slight shower or boisterous breeze. Cloaks



and boots, umbrellas, top-coats and water-proofs, enable the human race to go through almost any weather, *when they like the object of the journey*; and no slight impediments of disordered health are allowed to stand in the way when money is to be made or entertainment enjoyed. We argue, then, for bringing up the weather-mark of religion to that of common life and business.

By all means let the cone and drum be run up on every steeple when the heavens are telling of tempests that are dangerous to health and safety; and let these signs of storm and wind give warning to all intending worshippers of the mischiefs that menace the adorers of the Almighty. But if the condition of the atmosphere promises moderate repose, or only a degree of wet or cold against which ordinary protection sufficiently avails, then let us not expose religion to contempt, as an effeminate thing which depends on slight variations of temperature or the lesser accidents of the sky. 'He that observeth the clouds will not reap;'

and he that observeth the clouds will not persecute those labours of spiritual husbandry on which harvests depend.

The personal sacrifices systematically made by men in their secular vocations, offer a fine example in the present age. There are but few of Heaven's professed soldiers who undergo the amount of labour and discipline, and exhibit the degree of self-denial, undergone and exhibited by the soldiers in the armies of Christendom. If every soldier of God devoted himself to the mastery of his spiritual weapon, inspired by the same zeal with which we have seen a regiment of French Zouaves practising the sword and bayonet exercise in the brisk air at break of day, what results might not be expected in the victories of truth? If all of us who 'call ourselves Christians' were as resolved as they are on contributing our share to the vigour and success of regimental discipline,—to the velocity and impulse of a charge, to the precision and direction of a well-aimed volley,—

what might we not anticipate as the consequence in the refutation of error, in the spread of knowledge, in the overthrow of ecclesiastical despotism? If the women of the congregations were animated, in the spiritual sphere, by an equal zeal and purpose with those Spanish heroines who in Roman times gave their hair for the strings of cross-bows, and their labours on the fortifications to the defenders of their independence; or with those American ladies who in our own day have made the war almost as much their own as have their husbands and their fathers,—who can imagine what results would ensue in the advancement of truth and right upon earth?

But so long as religion is regarded very much in the light of an elegant luxury, appropriate to the upper and middle classes, the enjoyment of which depends in good measure on the dry or humid state of the air; so long as few will 'endure hardness,' as good soldiers, or soldiers' wives and daughters; so



long as multitudes persist in considering Sunday as a day for the display of dress, or pretty Prayer-books or Bibles ; so long as few men will work at a loss for things unseen, or without 'large money' and ample gain ; and so long as politeness, or abstinence from honest, but 'disagreeable,' language, is reckoned the one virtue of the Christian character,—just so long the study of truth will be neglected, heroic earnestness of belief will be an exceptional rarity, Samson will slumber in the dainty lap of Delilah, and the Philistines will triumph over the effeminate defenders of the kingdom of God.

CHAPTER X.

ON POLITENESS IN LADIES.

IT is one of the noblest charms of modern civilization, that it has taught common men something of delicacy and self-denial towards women—that it has rendered consideration towards them, in public and private, one of the chief pleasures of cultivated society. But every careful observer of customs must have noticed that of recent years a very large number of ‘the fair’ have begun to repay this consideration in public by an air of indifference, by a total absence of all acknowledgment for little favours conferred, and in fact in many cases by a manner which indicates that they have received but their due. ‘You have done that which it was your duty to do’ is language suitable to heaven, but not to the lips of the fair sex on earth.

We appeal to any gentleman much in the




habit of walking *sub dio*, or riding in omnibuses and railways, whether the manner in which numbers of well-dressed women are in the habit of receiving any such trifling attentions as offering a hand to steady their passage up or down a crowded vehicle, or making way for them on a muddy pathway or through a narrow gate—the insolent appearance of indifference, or offended dignity, the sullen refusal to acknowledge the civility by a faint smile, or a slight bow, or a single word, which constitute the return for men's politeness—are not sometimes such as well-nigh to create a resolution against all future compliances of the old-fashioned sort towards them? Here, very lately, came Mrs. Flouncer and her daughter. They effected an entrance with some difficulty into the vehicle—the passengers aiding them as they pressed forward by a series of dexterous dashings downward of their trailing robes, whose upward expansion, when crinoline was the rage, threatened every moment some dire catas-

trophe or revelation. You extended an innocent gloved hand to assist the mother first, and then the young lady, but in each case were met with a cool refusal to accept or acknowledge the proffered courtesy—and the silk mountains worked their way to the extreme corners, equally regardless of the endeavours made by the nearest passengers to find a few inches of extra room for their swelling magnificence.

Now, this sort of behaviour is fast breaking men of the habit of offering civilities of any kind to women in public. You are so perpetually requited with rudeness, or allowed to present your small sacrifice with less acknowledgment than a dog would receive, that many begin to think the days of courtesy to ladies are going to pass away.


And it is a marvellous pity. For those old times, when women exercised a gentle sway over violence and selfishness by imposing the law of chivalry upon men who found their reward in a gracious recognition



of little services and self-denials, were worth remembering in an age of ever-increasing crush and reckless self-interest ; and if they wholly pass away, it will be the fault mainly of the ladies themselves. In America many women of the lower-middle position have long lost their delicacy in social relations. They absolutely turn a man out of any seat which they prefer, and give him no thanks on the surrender. These Yankee viragos, however, are scarcely patterns to our English maidens. It should be part of our Old Country pride that the women never lose their high courtesy, their genial temper, their kindly habit of acknowledging the attentions paid to them as they pass along the road of life. To see English girls behaving like the self-contained republican minxes of New York, or taking the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, without a word or look of grace and thankfulness, is as sad a sight as can be beheld ; for it argues a great deal that is unseen—the departure

from the nation of lofty feeling and unselfish sacrifice, and it augurs a plunge into depths beyond.

Let every young lady, therefore, be instructed by her governess, if her own taste and feelings, or her own mother, have not already inspired the lesson, to acknowledge, if with a reticent dignity, yet with ready and humble grace, every civility of the minor sort offered to her by a gentleman, whether old or young ; being assured that nothing wins for women in general more love and admiration than such returns of kindness, and nothing earns for them more of neglect and contempt than the modern style of insolence and discourtesy. But there is need to ask pardon of all who are truly English ladies, for having used their name in giving a slight exhortation on manners to those who but imperfectly deserve the appellation.



CHAPTER XI.


ON CERTAIN OCCASIONS FOR SILENCE.

MAN is distinguished from the lower animals by the power of 'holding his tongue.' There are eight pairs of muscles by which the tongue is moved about in the mouth for the purposes of articulation. Every one of these sixteen little sinews is under the control of the will, and of the understanding, when there *is* an understanding to exercise such control. When an animal wishes to make a noise it is useless to order it to be still. A blue-bottle fly cannot help buzzing, nor, if we may believe the Poet Laureate, can 'a buzzard-clock' help 'bumming away,' like some of the parish clergymen in Lincolnshire. A dog, determined to bark, scarcely ever yields to a command to be 'quiet.' When 'the law comes' his noise revives. And when a donkey once stretches out his head and


begins to utter his mind, no sane person expects to reduce him to silence before the completion of his discourse.

Man's voice alone is subject to command. One of the first things we try to teach children is to be quiet. How large a part of their 'goodness' is commonly considered to consist in not making a noise. There are schools (of the Dotheboys-hall type, however,) where it is penal for pupils to talk, even in a whisper, over their dinner. There is no doubt that such a discipline confirms the worst tendency of Englishmen to a sullen reserve and uncommunicative gloominess. It is quite as often 'good' to speak as not to speak. The worst boys in a school are not always those who are most noisy. Bloodhounds do not bark, they spring in silence on their prey.

The object of the present chapter, however, is not to encourage discourse, even in England, but to impose silence on folks who talk at the wrong time. For example, it



sometimes by great fortune happens that two or three people meet in a company whose interchange of speech will be more interesting than that of all the other talkers put together. For one thing, they will keep for at least five or ten minutes to one subject, a custom the reverse of that which Addison ascribes to the majority of our countrymen in coffee-houses and drawing-rooms. They will quicken one another's faculties like birds singing in neighbouring cages; for when a man has a mind at all, it usually works best under the stimulus of conversation. Now, in order that company may yield its choicest pleasures, it is important that the smaller birds should not set up such a ceaseless united twitter as to drown the voices of these better-trained singers. Not that the sparrows and robin redbreasts ought to form a ring round the thrushes and canaries, and set them to sing against one another, for I have noticed that really good talkers abhor being 'set on' by a number of 'fules.' But if two or three useful continuous




conversers happen to be present, and show signs of being willing to talk for a while across a short chord of the circle, so that others may hear, or across a table covered with the mercies of Providence, then it is better for those people to be quiet for a short space who have nothing further to advance than that the day has been cloudy, or that shirtings are 'looking up', as the Indian telegram puts it, or that it is a sad thing to see so much discontent in Italy.

Of course these things are all true, and there is no harm in saying them at some time during the evening, even once or twice over to different people, since life would be unbearable without a great deal of small-talk and repetition ; but better things may be said in the hearing of all by more gifted mortals, if the ungifted will allow of the opportunity. If they will not, the chance is that the better sort of voices will mutually draw nearer during an entertainment, and exchange their thoughts only with each other. It requires

much tact in those of us who are common sort of people to know just how much to interfere with our superiors in conversation, for a certain mixture of foolish questions and observations is a decided assistance towards a profitable direction of the discourse. Total and unbroken silence in the sparrows is quite as fatal to the better sort of singing as incessant chattering. A moderate admixture of disorderly chirps is very helpful to a concert. But certainly it is not this element which best elicits thoughtful and connected harmony. Let us, therefore, to whom Heaven has denied the gifts of the lark and the nightingale, know how to hold our tongues for a few minutes when there is any of the better sort of music to be heard; or, at all events, break in only enough to assist the progress of the strain.

The same rule holds good, at least sometimes, with respect to instrumental music and songs of young ladies at domestic festivals in winter and spring. It is true that for much

piano-playing and vocal music the best possible accompaniment is a good obstinate buzz of conversation in all parts of the drawing-room. One rather likes, when enjoying a chat with an acquaintance, to hear a general diffused murmur of talking, amidst which the piano and the voice maintain a sort of orchestral accompaniment, which does not distract attention from the main interest of whatever little comedy or bye-play may be going forward. You know that in five cases out of ten the poor wretch in white muslin who has been dragged to the instrument to contribute her share to the evening's entertainment knows full well that she has no more voice than a grasshopper, and is only fitted to squeak out a little canzonet in the privacy of her own morning practice, as you also know that her profoundest wish is that nobody will be so polite as to keep up even an appearance of listening to her performance, either on the larynx or on the finger-board. Accordingly you don't particularly listen. You know,



perhaps, that the young woman's conversation would be worth many times over all her songs. But now and then there is conducted to the piano a player who is really capable of delighting the company, and then it is that you wish you could cry out, as I am told they do in the theatres,


‘ Silence in the galleries !
Order in the pit !
The ladies in the boxes
Can’t hear a bit ! ’

But it is useless. Society forms its habits from averages of experience ; and its average experience of amateur playing is, that a great deal of it is not worth listening to. Therefore when Sappho approaches the instrument she often suffers for the defects of her inferior sisterhood. You will sometimes in this manner see or hear most excellent playing and singing thrown away upon a heathen multitude, who are in full sonorous tattle over all the *salon* ; and in that case you wish that occasionally company could be struck dumb

and compelled to sit down and listen to strains which would send them wiser and better people to their homes.

There is another series of occasions in which the duty of observing silence is incumbent—which, however, are perhaps of a nature that renders the allusion scarcely fitting in connection with these *bagatelles*—I mean when congregations are assembled together in church. I shall venture, nevertheless, on a more serious word or two bearing in that direction.


I remember spending an evening many years ago in perfect solitude amidst the solemn gloom of the great Norman Cathedral of St. Stephen, which covers at Caen the bones, or at least the tomb, of William the Conqueror; an evening the impression of which has never worn away from my memory. One lamp burned at the distant end of the mighty edifice before a picture of the Virgin, beneath which a few poor women in scarlet skirts were bowing in silent prayer. There



was positively nothing else visible in the darkness; but the impression made on the soul by the grand and awful stillness of the ancient temple was such as to be ineffaceable for life. I spent an hour resting my spirit as it were on those deep waters of silence, and came away wishing that our English Protestantism provided rather more for that quiet which is the richest refreshment of the mind driven along too rapidly by the turbulent current of modern society. For one thing, it is much to be desired that our churches were 'open every evening and all day long, so that each of them might serve as a *proseucha* for persons who have no 'closet' at home, or who desired to turn aside for some moments' meditation and prayer in the midst of their secular occupations. The only security required would be the presence and guardianship of some pious and quiet old man or woman, who might be maintained (while also in winter the expense of warming was defrayed) by a penny offering in a box at the

entrance doors, and who might be directed to keep themselves generally in an ante-chamber, out of the way of the worshippers.

But Protestantism requires not only such facilities for individual 'retreats,' at any hour from the world : its public worship admits of much improvement in that repose which is essential to the action of the soul. No outward ceremonial can avail to strike awe into the outward behaviour of a congregation so well as a true inward spirit of adoration to the present God. As things are now, there is a general concurrence of causes tending to keep up, during the service, a series of movements and familiar noises. A large proportion of late arrivals, involving, during the prayers, an incessant tramp up the gangways of the church—with the returning footsteps of the pew-opener—sometimes the perpetual busy movement of a sprightly deacon,—the want of reverence in the posture of the worshippers, some few gazing all over the assembly—the absence of the indescribable




silence which always steals over companies of men realising the presence of the ETERNAL, —all conspire to rob the public gathering of much of its spiritual power and ennobling influence. It must be added that the frequent whisperings before the commencement of the service in Low Church and Nonconformist congregations, and the open outburst of conversation at the close, and at the doors, are to the last degree unfavourable to deep impressions on the mind. The Prayer-book provides, in the Ordination Service, for an interval of silent prayer :—‘ After this,’ says the rubric, ‘ *the Congregation shall be desired, secretly in their prayers, to make their humble supplications to God for all these things ; for the which Prayers there shall be silence kept for a space.*’ Would it not greatly tend to the infusion of solemn feeling into English congregations if such an appreciable ‘ space’ of silence, of five minutes’ duration at least, should be kept for prayers in the middle, or at the end, of every service ? Why should

the advantages of holy silence be all abandoned to the Society of Friends? It can scarcely be doubted that a united resolve to increase the solemnity of worship in any assembly would be followed with a large increase of religious blessing. I find that I have passed into a wholly different strain from that with which I began; but our moods in life run thus one into the other over the whole scale, and why should they not sometimes do so on paper?

CHAPTER XII.


ON SOME ARTS OF WASTING TIME.

IT is not quite easy to hit the exact medium between a wise leisureliness and a miserly improvement of time. There are some people who are always improving their time. Whenever you approach them, morning, noon, or night, they are at some kind of work. They sit down to breakfast, dinner, and tea with the air of a locomotive, stopping for a few moments at the station to take in coke and water,—gently fizzing and whizzing the while, and saying in every wheel and lever as the bell rings, ‘I shall be off again in a twinkling!’ They save their time down to its smallest fractions and shavings. They never have leisure to ‘do nothing,’ to sit in a wise vacancy before the fire, or in the open air gazing up steadfastly towards the firmament—or to walk through the corn-fields for the



mere sake of walking and breathing. They always have an 'object,' they know what they are going to do next, and to-morrow morning, and all day long.

Such persons are very useful in society. They put idle people to shame; they are like the great driving wheels that move all the other wheels in a factory. But at the same time it is rather tiresome to dwell with them. You find yourself tempted now and then to wish that they had a faculty for wasting time, and that in their useful and productive lives there were some years, or days, of release, during which the fields must lie fallow according to the commandment. There is no Sabbatical element in their being. On the Sundays they drive faster than ever, and get through twice the usual quantity of work. Their intervals of sleep are not so much rest as reaction; they go to bed with their brains busy, sleep with one eye open, and dream in orderly sequence, with a moral at the end of each story. These people are




indeed exceedingly scarce, but there are some of them in every neighbourhood, and they are raised up to be the organizers and secretaries of the rest of their fellow-creatures. But they are not made for friendship. They have no bosom in which any one can lay his head. If you should do so, you would only feel the iron breastplate of their righteousness, and hear the perpetual click of the inward machinery.

But such characters compel you to love and honour them, in spite of the fatigue they cause you, when you turn to look upon the great idle and wasteful multitude around. Verily it rouses indignation to observe how thoroughly many men's and women's lives are arranged on a plan for making void their existence. How can any life be turned to account in which the intellect is never strenuously occupied with its own discipline, with any endeavour to reduce its ideas to order, to establish them by evidence, to redeem them from vacuity, or to acquire systematic knowledge.

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Therefore among other arts of wasting time ought to be mentioned the indefinite extension of our acquaintance with neighbours and 'friends.' One cannot of course pretend to say that the human race ought to be 'cut' completely. Multitudes of them are undoubtedly persons with whom it is agreeable, and sometimes useful, to associate; but, as Mr. Thackeray says, 'too much of a good thing—it doeth not do'; and what I affirm is, that most of us see far too much of human society. We have come to know too many people by half. The facilities of communication by rail and by post have increased the frequency of contact with human beings until there is 'no place left where a man can stand alone in the earth.' In the great cities people are forming tastes which render the prospect of passing a week of quiet evenings around the family table or fireside decidedly disagreeable. Not only is there a most absurd multiplicity of engagements connected with churches and chapels, which profit neither



the intellect nor the heart, because of deficiency in previous private self-culture, (personal character not being formed simply by listening to discourses in miscellaneous assemblies,) but there is an endless series of invitations to parties, or casual 'friendly calls.' Far be it from us to decry 'parties.' People we know must see one another, must dress, and be looked at, must see and be seen, must play the piano and be played to; neither would we require too loftily pitched a tone of conversation at these wax-candle gatherings; but they ought not to be of too frequent occurrence. 'Company' ought to be the occasional interlude, the habitual quiet evening should be the rule. For if persons engaged in business or household work are to improve within, or to form and strengthen civilized tastes, the effort must be made in the evenings, or it will not be made at all.

As for the whole tribe of well dressed vagrants who go about making *morning* calls because they have nothing to engage them,


led by those idle feet for which Satan finds some mischief still, as he does for idle hands, to do, one wishes there were some piece of machinery invented, to be fixed at the gate of the house, which could detect the quality of every such destroyer of industrious people's time, and immediately that they set foot on the threshold present to their view a board with the inscription, 'Steel traps constantly set!' as a warning against danger impending over those whom S. Paul speaks of as persons who 'learn to be idle, and to go about from house to house, speaking things which they ought not.' Such people ought to be compelled to call in the mornings only on each other.

A second art of wasting your own and other men's time is by writing letters that are required neither by duty nor by affection. It may be granted that a certain number of letters are demanded by the serious business of life, and one must heartily commend all


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letters of affection, particularly to people abroad. It is delightful to consider as you hear the postman's knock resounding up the road, or meet him in his daily rounds, how many love-letters he is carrying to their destination, and how many people he is making happy morning after morning, as he delivers the effusions of sweethearts and lovers, of absent sons to mothers, of husbands to their wives, of people in the colonies to friends at home.

But there is now an immense number of letters that never ought to have been written, and which will waste or fritter away a great deal of time in procuring their answers. Most persons in public position suffer seriously from this infliction. If all the letters in a postman's bag were but half as wise and terse as Seneca's Epistles, or even half as pleasant as our dear Madame de Sevigné's, one would not lament the annual increase of the Post-office revenue. But it is altogether a different thing if a miserable man receive



half a dozen letters every week, in addition to all others, in which he is invited to give a lecture to some Association of 'Christian young men and women'—with the assurance that his 'expenses by rail or otherwise will be paid,' and he be expected to write in each case a civil reply explaining some of the reasons why he will do nothing of the sort, and to find his own postage stamps in addition. Such we have heard to be the experience of some distinguished instructors of the people. The sufferings of the editorial class of martyrs we do not so much bewail. People of that order deserve to receive some considerable and burdensome addition to their correspondence, and it is quite fair to compel them both to write freely in reply to applications on the delicate topic of contributions, to spend half their life in reading such contributions, and to pay heavy taxes to the exchequer for the privilege at the same time. Popular ministers again, among the Nonconformist heretics, are not much to be




pitied. Even if they spend the better part of their mornings in composing letters on the questions of church and organ openings, ordinations, and consecrations, they ought doubtless to suffer for the sins of the ecclesiastical system of which they are the main-stays and exponents.

But, for all that, the nuisance of letter-writing has reached a climax. It 'has increased, and ought to be diminished.' And we believe that every thoroughly good man or woman who sits down to write a note, an answer to which will be demanded by civility, will ask inwardly whether they are performing an innocent act in sending another letter to the Post-office. Above all, when writing to any person notoriously entangled already in a large correspondence, they will ask themselves whether they are acting under a necessity; or, on the other hand, needlessly robbing of his time and repose one whose occupation should render him sacred from assault, and whose spirit certainly ought not to be tempted

to break out in maledictions. That man has earned for himself a night's rest more calm than his neighbour's, who can lay his hand upon his heart day after day, and say, as the sun goes down, that, notwithstanding the temptation of the penny-post, he has not knowingly written any unnecessary letter, or one needlessly fitted to compel an answer.

Such are two of the devices by which the present generation distinguishes itself in time-killing; but the chief method remains untold. It is the wild desire of 'saving time' by living fast, which has seized upon this age, that is the principal means of squandering away human existence by wearing out its energies. The whole world is in motion like the insects in a magnified drop of water at the Polytechnic. Oh, this ceaseless racket of engagements, and journeys, and 'works of usefulness;' this perpetual jolting in omnibuses and railways; this wear and tear of millions rubbing against each other like




shingle on the troubled beach, under the eternal roll of the billows of social excitement; this daily race after riches and pleasures and vanities; this quenchless thirst for sensation, and amusement, and glorying in appearance—where will it end? Why, it will end, if the best heads amongst us are to be believed, in a paralysis of the inner life of the nations. It will end in the suppression of serious thought, of private religion, of heroic testimony, and of self-denying enterprise. It will end in rendering worship more and more an affair of musical formalities, and church-zeal a passion either for decorative architecture or decorative preaching. It will end in obliterating the distinction in the public conscience between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; until the speed ever accelerating at which men ‘rush forward’ in their course, the spirit of literature and of religion will become more and more defiant, and the final plunge will be taken at length over the precipice of popular scepticism. But of this more in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON GOING TOO FAST AND TOO FAR.

I LIKE sometimes to take a walk in a country lane, for the mere sake of recalling the age before railways. The new methods of railway travelling are operating a change on human life, not only in its social aspects, but in individual character. The first and most obvious effect produced by the facilities for getting away from home is the distribution of the people. Large cities are growing larger at a rate formerly unknown. The metropolis especially, rendered accessible to energetic spirits from all parts of the country, is increasing to a size which confounds the imagination. London, ten times too big, now contains one-tenth of the inhabitants of the British Islands; three times as many as Wales; nearly half as many as Ireland; and about as many people as the whole of



Scotland and her adjacent isles. It would require only three hundred and fifty Londons to people the four quarters of the globe, with all its continents and archipelagos.

This rapid and enormous increase of great cities cannot but exert a mighty influence upon the character of the folk who dwell in them. What this influence is, it is*by no means difficult to ascertain. It is in itself a system of education. You may account it an advantage, in comparison with the rural seclusion and torpor of former times, to live where the wonderful 'diffusion of useful knowledge,' and the ~~unceasing~~ activities of business, produce a general spirit of intelligence rendering an absolute trance of the understanding almost impossible. Much of the intelligence thus called into action may be wrongly directed, but none who know by experience the fatal dulness which seizes upon human creatures in sequestered districts will hesitate to allow that the stir of modern life is attended with some advantages.

In London especially, the residence of so many thousands of the most powerful spirits, incessantly occupied in influencing and arousing the myriads around them, through the legislature, the press, the pulpit, the platform, and conversation, produces an accumulation of intellectual force which offers the most striking contrast to the condition of a thinly inhabited territory. Here all the wide spheres of British life have their common centre. Law and government, aristocracy and rank, trade and commerce, wealth, science, art, manufactures, literature, military and naval power, and religions of every name, here find their chosen chief abodes, here build their palaces of legislation, their princely houses, their courts of justice, their royal exchanges, their custom houses, warehouses and docks, their halls of learning, their galleries, museums, and exhibitions, their factories and workshops, their treasuries and admiralties, their crystal domes, their towering cathedrals, and their countless spires. Mind in its most perfect


development has built up mighty London ; here it fights out the battle of life with a flaming zeal which vanquishes all obstacles, and makes its influence felt like the heart of the world to the ends of the earth.

The ordinary labour for a livelihood here, therefore, is in itself an education. The necessity that exists for strenuous effort in all departments to secure a competency, the tide of competition against which nearly every one alike is compelled to struggle, give exercise to the most torpid faculties, and summon the toiling myriads to their daily task, as if they were soldiers aroused at the enemy's approach by the sound of the trumpet.

The influence of this aggregation is so great that it diffuses itself, by reaction, to the extremities of the kingdom. Every city is visited more or less by the current which here takes its beginning. Who can estimate the number of persons that under former conditions would have spent their lives in the bovine jog-trot of old England,

who now are thoroughly awakened, and are putting forth twice or thrice the energy which they would have shown in the days of stage-coaches and country isolation.

And this awakening extends in some degree to all their modes of thought. The decline of old superstitions, the extension of knowledge as to the elements and resources of nature, the quick-wittedness which renders them able to understand what is passing, and to receive impressions from books and newspapers, are all signs of the same change. He, who having known the dwellers in a provincial town in the ante-steaming times, should revisit it now that four or five railways pass near its environs, will be somewhat astonished at the change in the very aspect of the people. The old dreamy ox-like gaze is exchanged for an alertness and purpose in the eye which show what has been going on within. A new world of ideas has broken in upon the dusky cathedral precincts, the close and narrow shops, and the once quiet streets. Every-




thing bears a new front. A new world of plate-glass has come into being. The bright broad windows of the draper, the stationer, the grocer, only typify the alteration in the action of thought and feeling among the provincials. Towns, where everything used to be so slow that life seemed a river whose motion was imperceptible under the overhanging shadows, now are filled with a stream of activity that runs and gurgles by, chafing at every obstacle, and shaking the old bridges with a vigour which leaves no doubt as to the speed with which the current is passing along. The fashions of Regent-street reach in a few weeks the servant-maids of Old Humdrum and Wakem-up, and the yeoman-farmer's daughter sports at the village church, within three months, the bonnet of Bond-street and the Quadrant. The literature of the whole country is one. The same *Cornhill*, *Macmillan* and *Good Words*, which lie on the table of the Londoner, lie on the green table of the provincial mechanics' institute and village

reading-room, amidst a shower of daily newspapers which bring together the records of humanity from the four winds of heaven.

Everything thus goes faster than in the days of yore. Life is rising everywhere to a higher level. The whole population of 'spry citizens' is going forward at double-quick time. But is this in all respects an improvement upon the days of repose departed? A thousand times No! The speed is now as much too great as it used to be too small. Society is becoming one vast express, with wheels that leave a train of sparks behind. Every clock takes its time from the railway,—every movement tries to rival the rapidity of the 'line.' If we look on life as having some higher object than the transaction of outward business, or the enjoyment of outward pleasure, we shall find that the new speed in thought and action is not favourable to improvement. It is as if some crafty Devil, after having kept society asleep for ages, were now bent on driving it quite mad with


excitement. The real improvement of society depends on the improvement of individuals ; and the improvement of individuals depends more upon quietness than upon velocity. When 'everyone rusheth on in his course as the horse rusheth into the battle,' we must not look for the consideration which says '*what have I done?*' It matters little that a penny should now turn twice where it turned but once before, or that a countryman should find it easy to reach a city for his business, or the hills for his pleasure, if he himself have attained to no nobler view of being in its chief aims and methods than in the days when he was chained to his village home. None will venture to say that the locomotion of this day is favourable to habits of studious reflection and repose. A superficial quickness of perception is spread around, but the habit of patient study lessens every year. The speed then in which our contemporaries so much rejoice, is likely to prove injurious to the higher interests of the country. The



express train carries people who are slow of heart to believe all that prophets have written; however gloriously it may signify, as it rushes like a shot through a station, the celerity with which Mr. A., of Salford, or Glasgow, can communicate his muslins, or his ideas on a transaction in jute, to Mr. B., of Birmingham. This go-ahead spirit is essentially that which, half-pig half-devil, rushes down 'a steep place into the sea to be drowned.' The chief want of this time is silence, repose, retirement, and study; and the new inventions in travelling, however they may tend to material progress, are likely to become hindrances to moral growth. The time saved is not better spent. More actions are performed, but they are not wiser than before. More business is done, but the money made is not devoted to the ends of the spirit. The body flies but the soul slumbers. The world goes too quick to allow of the reflection which alone renders it safe or justifiable to live. There is an under

sense of dissatisfaction beneath all the swift-ness of life's shuttle, men feel that to move forward is not always to advance, and they need that one should confront them and say to them as was said by Job to Elihu—'Stand still—and *consider* the wonderful works of God!'

There is another aspect of the case which is little favourable to the improvement of the people. The facilities for removal from country-towns are destructive of those abiding personal influences, on which so much of the stability of character depends. Formerly a christian pastor could reckon upon living to see the result of his care of young people in the fruitfulness of their maturity. The long duration of pastorships, and the long residence of families in the same place were alike favourable to solidity of character. Now the shepherd is nearly as moveable as the flock. Society is gipsified, and is all more or less in a state of vagrancy. None continueth in one stay. Every man's days




are as a shadow. It seems almost useless to love people, who will very likely to-morrow give notice to quit to their landlord, and to their clergyman. Congregations are every year more demoralized by the frequent absence of families at the sea-side or on the continent. Summer obliterates the effect of the winter's work. All this is unfavourable to the finer developments. Trees without deep roots seldom bear much fruit. Plants which are constantly being repotted remain stunted in their growth. The prevailing passion for changes of residence is far from propitious to the spirit. The strength which comes from ancient sympathies is thrown away. The interior realities of communion are sacrificed to plate-glass and a movement up the hill.

Church life becomes shallower, while society expands and grows. Few things tend to consolidate the higher interests of nations more than the long continuance of households on the same ground. The Jewish

land-law of the Jubilee was planned with this end in view. Whatever dignifies the family dignifies the nation. Whatever tends to dissipate the family, as the minute division and easy transfer of land in France, degrades the nation, weakens local power, and nurtures a central despotism. The temptations to frequent removal, presented by the system of railways must be regarded, therefore, as unfavourable to some of the nobler interests of life. When the flight is made from country towns and villages, where the knowledge of every one's character operates as some check on behaviour, to a great city, where the shame of publicity is exchanged for the secrecy of an overwhelming crowd, the moral depravation that ensues is likely in many cases to be both rapid and complete. And this I say, in spite of the exclamation 'O you old heathen!' which I hear from every railway engineer.


And then there is the Telegraph. A fine nerve-net-work of wires has converted the



whole globe into one living body, conscious at each point of all that happens to it at every other point of its surface. We are thus brought into startling connexion with the chief events that are taking place in foreign lands, and in all parts of our own country. With the opportunity of such knowledge comes the ever growing desire of knowing the 'things which have happened.' Many of these 'things' it is doubtless an advantage to know. The telegraph is a clear gain in politics, in trade and in commerce, and a convenience in some of the minor details of common life. But we question whether in the higher departments of thought the advantage is to be equally esteemed. The passion for news burns with an insatiable flame, which not even all the newspapers can sufficiently appease or aliment. But of what advantage is it to most persons to know at breakfast time what has happened in all parts of the world during the last twenty-four hours? 'The eyes of a fool are at the ends of the earth.' Men require to have their

already vagrant attention directed to their own sphere of duty and of life, yet the daily reading of the generality directs them chiefly to consider distant spheres. The telegraph has enlarged our daily knowledge of events, at the expense of distracting minds already sufficiently indisposed to read that which bears directly upon their own chief interests and social duties.


This would be an evil if it stood alone, but the quality of the events reported affects the character of the receiver of the news. The world is like the troubled sea, the events which spring out of its restless depths are for the most part disquieting and unsatisfactory. 'Ill news flies apace,' and the substance of each day's report from the universe is a fresh edition of violence, turbulence, and crime. The newspapers collect together and bring to a focus the chief evils that are wrought or plotted from day to day under the sun. To read such narratives daily as now come to us from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, can-



not but communicate the world's unrest to the spirit. It is not good for the mind to be filled ever and again with pictures of all the worst actions performed among men. For it is the bad actions generally which obtain publicity. The wicked actions of rulers and of private criminals constitute the staple of the information furnished by the journals. The good that is wrought in the world makes little noise in comparison. If daily a newspaper were to be published describing all the best actions recently performed among men, the effect would be to brighten our views of life, of providence, of humanity, but then no one would read it. We read of atrocious crimes, wicked politics, wicked statesmanship, and miserable calamities, until we come to think that the world is wholly black ; and we puzzle over a Divine Administration which seems to be covered with a cloud of thick darkness. The millions of happy homes in the world make no report in the newspapers. The millions of self-denying and heroic deeds daily

wrought send no message to us by the telegraph. It is the dark moral hemisphere which sends us its swift communications,—while the bright averted hemisphere of good is silent and still. Those who read much news ought to read much history of the lives of good men, and they who read much of either ought to read the ‘things which the prophets have spoken’—for there, and there alone, is sure and certain hope of the victory of Heaven.

On the whole I find that the railway and the telegraph, like so many other human inventions, are instruments of good or evil, according to the quality of the employer; and therefore that they tend to moral evil in the case of that majority who, being evil, oppose no resistance to temptation. The world is doubling its pace as it rushes forward to its doom, as Niagara flies in broad volume along its channel just before it leaps into the abyss. The immense speed of human life augurs no good to a race which has not improved its principles along with its means of com-



munication. The old base passions dominate amidst the new creations of science. The press of business, the rivalry of nations, the hurry of competition, the gay scenes of amusement, the blaze of Regent Street and Piccadilly, indispose the mind for that inner and secret life on which true nobleness depends. We live in a sort of Mælstrom, such as Edgar Poe has described; each voyager drifts into the whirlpool as by the suck of an almost irresistible vortex; and the force which operates in a reverse direction to draw him away into calmer waters frequently proves inadequate to its end.

But you will say—Here is a new edition of the Lamentations of *Jeremiah*; and you had better not find fault with the Nineteenth Century, for if you do they will not read your testimony. True, my dear reader, but the first end in life is not to be listened to, but to be right.

CHAPTER XIV.


ON THE POWER OF ONE FOR GOOD OR ILL.

THE signal that floated on Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar was but the translation into a local dialect of the eternal signal that waves over the battle of life throughout the creation—that THE UNIVERSE EXPECTS EVERY ONE TO DO HIS DUTY; and it would be well if each of us were fighting in his proper sphere with the zeal and earnestness with which, at Nelson's stirring appeal, the sailors of the English fleet set to work to confound the French, either by sinking them in the Atlantic, or blowing them up to heaven in flames of fire.

The last lesson which is effectually taught to most people is precisely that which the history of the world is specially designed to teach—the awful consequences of one man's action or neglect. Every sinner is a great sin-maker.

Every bitter fountain derives its bitterness from the abysmal depths of evil, and is sufficient for the supply of a perennial river of poisonous waters. Each man's will is a living cause, and the fact that he is a man is akin to the other fact that immense results of some kind must flow from his actions.


Yet the generality cannot be persuaded of their own power. Ready to assert the importance of self when their rights are invaded, or even threatened, quick to resent real and even fancied slights offered to their dignity by other men, they yet hold habitually the humblest views of their self-importance when duties are to be done or combinations effected for the welfare of society. There is no excuse more common than this,—‘I am but one, of what account is my single action, presence, or help; I shall not be missed. Others will be at their post to whom it is less inconvenient than to myself, I pray thee have me excused.’



Thus does this humble individual pass through life soothed in the habitual neglect of his duties by the remembrance of his insignificance. He teases the tax-gatherer by omitting to pay for his water, or gas, or good government at home or abroad, because everybody else will pay at the proper place, or at the appointed time. He is late at breakfast because everybody else will have been long down stairs. He is absent from the committee or book club, because most likely plenty of other people will be there. He avoids the rainy walk to the Sunday-school, because probably others will condemn the weather and be present with their class. He is late at the Divine worship in the morning, because numbers of good people will have arrived in time ; and he wholly absents himself in the evening, because being but a single individual his presence will not be missed in the congregation. In holy song he singeth not, in holy responses answereth not again, because one voice cannot add much vigour to the strain. He avoids

the church or vestry meeting, because there are others who can attend to 'public business;' and he deprives his friends of his countenance and aid on occasions of difficulty because the influence of one person is so infinitesimally small.

In politics he acts on the same exalted principle. He forsakes the hustings, because there are plenty of voters of the same mind with himself, and they will doubtless secure the success of the right candidate. He wishes well to his country, but he does not meddle in politics. No doubt it is desirable to obtain patriotic representatives, but in all probability such will present themselves without being sought for, and will be elected by those who happen to go to the poll. He practises the new grand doctrine of Non-intervention, which signifies that the weakest ought to go to the wall, and that by-standers may innocently look on and say nothing even when the foulest injuries are inflicted. It is quite proper for others to sacrifice time, labour, and thought in



securing the triumph of right, and quite their duty, if they so think it, even to risk something in the furtherance of the good cause; but he is too much entangled with the opposite interest to permit of independent action, and therefore he must content himself with applauding the enterprise and self-denial of his more active friends.

In money matters the same convenient rule applies. The objects proposed to him for support are excellent. The service of God ought to be maintained in efficiency and honour. The ministry, home and foreign missions, schools, the expenses of worship, all ought doubtless to receive the zealous aid of the public. For himself, he is but an insignificant and 'umble individual, like Uriah Heep; it matters little what he shall contribute, others who are better able will 'cast in much.' Nevertheless he will give 'his *mite*'—and he gives it; he gives to the Lord of the Universe that which costs him nothing; he presents on the golden table of the shewbread the crumbs

which have fallen from his own, because the rest of the congregation will supply the appointed loaves and the frankincense. Or very likely, being only an individual, he omits his subscription altogether.

And thus it is, through the combined inaction of these modest characters, through the multiplication on all sides of these humble do-nothings, that all the great causes on earth are hindered, starved, and defeated on every hand. It was the man who had but one talent that hid 'his lord's money in the earth' in a napkin, and it is not wonderful (though doubtless he himself was greatly astonished at so severe a doom), that we read that his sentence was, to be bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness. For it is through the influence of these persons who can each 'do so little,' that the general sums of labour, of money, of authority, which we require for the efficient advance of truth and right on earth, dwindle down into insignificance. Each man is hiding behind another, until there are

scarcely a dozen in a hundred who are ready to fight in the front rank, and the whole army is filled with distrust and despair.

There are few matters of more import in life than early to instruct young persons in the value and power of littles, and in the truth that the little is the seed of much. Ring it in the ears of all that 'a penny a-day amounts to more than thirty shillings by the year,' and that the systematic contributions of a hundred poor will realize far larger sums than the occasional donations of the stingy rich. Teach them the habit of steadily giving littles at the offertory, and you will soon astonish them with the golden contents of the Lord's treasury at the year's end. Depict at the temple-gate the awful image of the burier of the one talent, bound hand and foot, and hurrying to perdition—and instruct the miscellaneous apologists for personal neglect in the doom of do-nothings, and you will soon observe a change in the fragrance of the public sacrifice. Above all, teach them that money is less than labour,

and that work in the temple is demanded of all God's servants, that 'something attempted, something done,' is required by the Master in Heaven as the condition of each night's repose, and then the temple-wall will swarm with the artificers, and will prove that the lesson of the bees and coral insects has been learned to purpose among men.

Thus by united action, in which the feeblest takes a part, shall works of justice and of mercy testify to the sovereignty of God on High ; thus shall ignorance be dispelled by wholesome and industrious instruction ; thus shall sorrow be allayed by fore-thinking and comprehensive kindness ; thus shall temples be reared and presbyteries and bishoprics upheld by generous and systematic offerings to God ; and thus shall each servant of Heaven be stimulated to do his uttermost by the conscious presence, support, and sympathy, of the righteous multitude.

CHAPTER XV.

ON READING TOO MUCH.


THE abundance of printed matter in the present age threatens to introduce habits of reading which will nullify the object of the invention of the press. The object of printing was to render it easier to grow wise, by rendering it easier to read. But now-a-days one chief obstacle to growing wise is this very easiness of reading. Every year more people read, and fewer people in proportion grow wise by reading. The penny newspapers, condensing as it were into an abstract all the bad things that are said and done daily around the world,—the circulating libraries, turning on, like water-companies, a stream of 'light literature' into every house, do not assist the education of human beings in those parts of moral philosophy in which it most behoves them to become proficient, and

do not cultivate that power of active thought which ought to be the final result of meditation and study.

One sometimes, however, in the country, comes across the path of an old-fashioned mind, educated according to the lights and customs of the slower ages of England. And how pleasant it is to look in at those steady but not stupid old eyes, and to see there some remainder of that rustic power of contemplation which is passing away from among us. As such a top-booted ancient sits upon a bench in the shade, or leans upon a five-barred gate in the evening sunshine, considering the prospect, and conversing of the things which have happened during his time, you are made to feel how great is the charm of slow thinking, based on deliberate observation—how different a thing it was to live when each image was permitted to sink into the mind, and time was allowed for the operation of the moral faculties upon the subjects presented to the senses and the

judgment. The mind seemed to rest upon the underlying eternity as a lotus floats upon the water of Nilus. It enjoyed the infinite delight of tranquillity—a pleasure far surpassing every satisfaction of the thirst for excitement. There were fewer topics of thought, but each was more thoroughly mastered, and the end of the study was an addition to the fixed property of the soul. The human character more nearly resembled the old oaks and beeches and elms, beneath whose durable shadow it grew up and lived and died. The process of thinking and learning was indeed almost as slow as the process of a tree's clothing itself with foliage in spring and summer; but when the thoughts were formed, they moved with a pleasant murmur that spake of inward repose.

If you accompanied such a relic of the elder times to his home, you found but few books, and no newspapers or reviews. There were no brightly-bound rows of 'Introductions' to all the sciences; no handy-books of




law, physic, and divinity ; no shelves loaded with gilded novels, and charming treatises on every aspect of infidelity and faith ; but there was the Bible, and a Commentary, and a History of the World, and a Gazetteer, and a Shakespeare, and a Paradise Lost, and a *Spectator*, and Mr. Richardson's Memoirs of Sir Charles Grandison, together with a few treatises on Gardening, on Agriculture, and on Domestic Medicine—a small library, but larger than Noah took with him into the ark, or Moses into the wilderness of Sinai. These books the old gentleman read over and over again, and he found them inexhaustible. He read them, and enjoyed them ; and he found that the more he read them, the better he could think, the more clearly he could see both the earth and the heavens, and the deeper he could see into the fellow-creatures that surrounded him. He would have cut but a sorry figure in modern company. His stately old mind would have broken down at once under a modern 'exa-

mination ;' yet he enjoyed the possession of a mind twenty times more than all these fever-stricken unfortunates who are feasting on the literature of the new world. He could take up an octavo book on a serious subject, and read it through, which is more than can be said for most of our contemporaries. He read almost every page twice over, found out what the author meant, 'turned it over' in his mind, then went forward, and put in a marker to show where the lesson had ended.

I do not know that it is of any use to take the young people of this generation by the button, and to ask them, once more, not to go so fast. The answer is at hand : 'Our pace is fixed for us by the railway companies, by the omnibuses, by society at large.' Literally and physically, we are compelled to move more quickly than 'the excellent persons of yesterday' (as Jeremy Taylor calls our forefathers), and the mind partakes of the increased velocity. Well, it is of no


use looking at an express, and wishing that it went only ten miles an hour. It *must* fly, or there will be no dividend. We must resign ourselves to the age of telegraphs, six hundred pounders, and needle-guns. The only remedy, if we find ourselves going too fast, is to get out of the train, and retire a little from the world. And this is the practical lesson. Solitude is every year becoming a more indispensable condition of thought, reading, and self-discipline. Every man must keep a 'retreat,' who would fight for his individuality; and in that retreat he must exercise himself on a few solid and favourite books. I know one man who goes to the City every day, and who has read Butler in his daily walks through the crowded thoroughfare, a little at a time, over and over, so that he has at length mastered the great moralist in a manner which would astonish many a student on the banks of the Cam or Isis; but this man is one of ten thousand—one to whom communion with the mighty dead is a neces-

sity of his being. But it is men of this sort that we require, even if of an inferior degree of self-discipline—men who know what it is to pore over their Bibles with a fixed and undistracted gaze—to set a topic of inquiry before them, meditating upon it until the mind seems to enter into its very substance, turning it over and over, revolving it under every tint of sunlight and of shade, until its image becomes a portion of the spirit's essence. These are the men who alone can redeem the age from inanity, and that passion for outward show and easy doctrine which is threatening to destroy us. These are the only readers who are capable of a sympathy with the great characters of the past, or of continuing their enterprises. These are the only men for whom 'the grand and ancient and received truths' will retain any attraction in an age of hollow pretension, unmatched impudence, and universal change; the only men who will resist the conclusion that 'there's nothing true, and nothing knowable for cer-



tain, and nothing worth living or dying for in such a world as this.'

Let us end by presuming to ask the dear reader (if he be under twenty) whether he could tell us in a minute what are his favourite books; how often he has read them; and what effect they have had upon his work in life: or whether he has none, but is a regular reader of *Punch* and the *Daily Telegraph*, of the worldly-wise *Macmillan* and *Cornhill*, of the slightly acetic *Saturday Review*, of the Scotch haggis provided in the pages of the various Sunday Magazines, and of the sweetly-sugared discourses and criticisms of the *Spectator*. If this be all his reading, we will tell him frankly that, although he is very nearly of age, he will never be a man; for no man was ever yet formed exclusively or chiefly on an intellectual diet of newspapers and magazines.



CHAPTER XVI.

SECOND AND MORE SUSTAINED ATTACK ON CERTAIN HABITS OF READING.

ONCE there were no books. Before the deluge they seem to have had not even a spelling-book. It was a great bookless world for two thousand years. The schoolmaster was not abroad,—and it must be confessed that in those ages men generally appear to have done little credit to the simplicity of nature. The portion of the earth which was peopled became one immense battle-field. The earth was ‘filled with violence.’ Their one aim in life was to knock each other on the head. It was a population of ruffians at last, whose history did not deserve more than half a dozen verses in a post-diluvian chronicle.

Not, however, that it was impossible for the world in that age to produce great and

good men without books, since, although destitute of circulating libraries, it was very far from being devoid of high methods and instruments of instruction. It was a world that produced an Enoch, a man so wise and so holy, so intimate in the closest relationship with the Infinite Spirit, that for him Heaven antedated the resurrection by a bodily translation to the upper glory. And he—the best—was but one of many good. Truth-seeking souls were not abandoned, although Paternoster-row was then overgrown with the primeval forest, or overflowed with the primeval ocean. The thinking power resided in each man; and he who could reason strenuously before the flood was in a better position than the unreasoning book-glutton after it. Intellect was fresh upon the planet. Ideas were not too numerous for the mind. There were no encyclopædists. They lived nine hundred years, grew as slowly as oaks, thought deliberately, and, if disposed, could see clearly in consequence. There were no express

trains, and they read leisurely, if they pleased, the direction-posts and milestones on the high-road of life. There was not that congestion of the faculties through crapulent consumption of intellectual aliment which causes in modern times confusion of thought from the gorging of the mind's digestive apparatus. A man's ideas might, under such circumstances, consist of original observations, and be as clearly defined and brightly coloured as the images in a solar microscope. The feeling of being long-lived must have given a leisureliness and repose to meditation, which added tenfold to its enjoyment. They had immediate revelation to instruct them, a wonderful quickener of all the energies; they had tradition from their fathers, and, with due submission to the fossil anthropologists, even from Adam himself, the mysterious descendant of the Eternal; they had observation of nature and Providence; they had private thought, dialogue, and public discussion; and with such sources of instruction

as these a Patriarch would be very nearly as well off as if he were the possessor of the Bodleian library.


In these present days, of men formed wholly on books, one would like occasionally to meet with a mind fresh from that great bookless world of early antiquity; one of the men who had noticed for himself, because there was no nautical almanack to tell him, what stars rose and set at the different seasons of the year in the spangled sky; who had observed with his own eyes what plants grew around him, and when they crowned themselves with flowers; and who tried experiments with his own hand on the medicinal virtues of the herbs of the field; one who had derived impressions respecting the Unseen Causes from an original insight into the creation, and from reflection on the awful operations of conscience within. Such a man would be an inspiring companion. He would make us feel that there was something alive in his spirit. We could not mistake his soul

for an intellectual mummy painted all over with other men's ideas.

But books of all sizes, pamphlets, tracts, papers, are now multiplied beyond calculation. All minds are surrounded with the profuse records of other men's thinking, and this places every man in a new position of trial. Previously, a bad soul was confined to the area of its own cogitations, or to those of its associates. Now, a bad man can summon to his help the most wicked thinkers of all ages. He can receive into his soul, by reading, the condensed essence of the sin of the world, as a virulent stimulant to his own villanies; he can store his own spirit with the perilous stuff treasured up by generations in the devil's arsenals, and thus convert it into a sort of bombshell, ready to flame and burst and scatter fiery destruction amidst the fairest works of God or of man. Therefore to turn the reading of but one person into the right direction is at least worth an endeavour.

It is not every one in the present day who

knows how to read, although we all fancy that we have acquired this accomplishment. The object of reading is to obtain a thorough transfusion from the book into our own minds of the author's spirit, and this is not attained in most cases by the rapid swallowlike skimming of the surface, which is what the majority of persons call reading. To read a book thoroughly that is really worth the trouble is a work that requires a throwing forth of the soul upon the page, in the last degree unlike the easy-chair-style of attention which is all that the majority of men afford to the business. It requires that the thoughts of the mind be brought to a focus, like the rays of a great burning glass; and do not wander like reflected beams on the ceiling from a vase of water on the table. This habit of concentration and vigorous receptiveness is possessed by none but those who have really devoted themselves to the study of a few favourites. There are multitudes who say that they have read hundreds of books, who never yet honestly and manfully read one.



Between true and false reading there is all the difference that exists between eating and digesting solid food for the purpose of nutrition, and the smoking of opium or tobacco. In the one case there is mastication, chemical action, useful absorption—in the other, mere suction and diffusion of vapour, leaving behind no result but stupidity and sloth. This intellectual smoking is going forward all around us. A book in the hands of the generality is a mere cigar or opium pill. Cheap and abundant ‘literature’ is the opium of this China of the west, Great Britain, where men’s ideas are for the most part stereotyped and unalterable. Nothing more certainly puts out a feeble fire than too much fuel heaped upon it so as to exclude the air ; and nothing so certainly extinguishes the flame of honest and independent thought as the perpetual reading of easy writing by those who have scarcely learned to think at all.

It is impossible, therefore, to lay too much stress upon a young person’s obtaining a

solid acquaintance with a few masterpieces in literature. Suppose, for example, it be Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' or his minor prose works, or Bacon's Essays. Let these books be read deliberately line by line, with the endeavour to obtain, as from a steel-die, a vivid impression of each image, to affix a clear meaning to every word employed, to comprehend each argument, to receive an inspiration from every glow of sentiment, or gleam of beauty; above all, with an endeavour to watch the thoughts suggested in the mind of the reader by each passage in the writer, to mingle spirits, to allow the recorded argument or passion of departed greatness to exercise its full incantation upon the learner. Let the mind, like the sunbeam, dwell on each sentence until like a flower it unfold its beauties and its fragrance. Let the reader believe that there are written pages deserving of hours of protracted and repeated meditation—let the work of the understanding and of the heart upon these pages resemble in slowness the work of

the sculptor upon marble, imitative, yet creative. Let him return to the beginning when he has reached the end. Let the same work be read, and read again, until it is nearly learned by heart ; and thenceforth the student will have a right to say that he has read one book.

But the process will not end there. He will hereafter look with a different feeling upon books, and the generality of their readers. He will know that few of the talkers around him ever thus diligently sat at the feet of a great man to 'hear his words.' The Mary-soul will seem to him a rare vision of beauty among a world of confused and cumbered Marthas. He will recognise in the multitude that grey-shadowed style of thought, that colourless aspect in their notions, which prevents them from clearly distinguishing their meditations, and leads them so readily into a muddle. Common-place minds are like the thickly dusted glasses of a bad microscope. The lenses are imperfect, and the dust makes

them dimmer still. There are no clearly defined, brilliantly illuminated images. And to common-place minds every thing around seems common-place.

Full of force is the following portraiture in the *Excursion*, in which Wordsworth describes the opposite condition of an earnest spirit in youth :—


‘ So passed the time ; yet to the nearest town
He daily went with what small overplus
His earnings might supply, and brought away
The book that most had tempted his desires,
While at the stall he read. Among the hills
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,
The divine Milton.
So the foundations of his mind were laid
In such communion, not from terror free.
While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness ; and deep feelings had impressed
Great objects in his mind, with portraiture
And colour so distinct, *that in his mind*
They lay like substances, and almost seemed
To haunt the bodily sense. He had received
A precious gift ; for as he grew in years

With these impressions, he would still compare
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms ;
And being still unsatisfied with aught
Of dimmer character, he thence attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain ; *and on their pictured lines*
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams.'

Assuredly one main difference between minds is this distinctness in conception. Almost any intellect possesses the power of interesting itself, and of interesting others, which sees objects and events through a bright atmosphere in their individuality. This is the charm of our best modern writers and painters who throw the sunlight of distinct vision from within on the commonest objects. In the morning sunlight even a pebble in the road glistens into beauty. Whether they describe the dress of a pauper child, or a heap of autumn leaves, or the interior of a furnished drawing-room, it is partly the distinctness and the truth which interest and

delight us. The eye looks, but the mind sees, and as the prophet said long ago, men 'look, but see not.'

If this is true with regard to outward nature, it is at least equally true with respect to the world of books, and especially with that part of literature which does not arouse the action of the mind by the stimulus of sensual passion. It is the rare exception, and not the rule, in the present day to find a reader deep in a book of the better class. The fatiguing multiplicity of outward affairs leaves but small leisure to men of business. From morning till night they are engaged in coining money, copper, silver, or gold, as the case may be, in the great mint of the business world, and after their labours they are generally ready for dinner, amusement, or sleep. Their anxieties accompany them to their homes, so that if even they were less weary, they do not possess a mind sufficiently undistracted to devote themselves to anything that can be called study. Accordingly, unless they




have formed in early life a habit of self-improvement, a taste 'unsatisfied with aught of dimmer character,' it is certain that no book which requires protracted exertion of the faculties will obtain any portion of their regards, or at least that portion of them which is essential to the mastery of it. Hence arises a desire for something which interests for the moment, without laying a perceptible tax upon the understanding, or demanding a continuous attention.

The 'railway literature' of the day abundantly satisfies this market. It is expressly designed for a scrap-feeding generation. Your brisk, sharp, modern man can make himself master of every subject in an hour. With a speed equal to that of the train in which he is travelling, he can race through a story-book, and learn all about a country, or a principle, or a national policy. By the help of 'Half Hours with the Best Authors,' he can absorb the wisdom of the ancients, and digest it in a twinkling. He has his opinion ready on a

hundred subjects weekly, and advances it with the utmost confidence and authority. He has made up his mind, and, as Herr Teufelsdröck says, he is unwilling to untie the precious bundle. In politics, in religion, in literature, he is equally ready and decisive. There is nobody so ready with his orthodox or infidel arrogance as your man of magazine-scrap. He is ever ready to rush into the theatre with his hands full of dust, and throwing it into the air along with his hat, to cry, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' In public meetings of such people it is natural that the 'more part should not know wherefore they have come together,' since the aggregation of unwise units never produces a wise myriad.

Now, pardonable as this superficial style of reading and choice of literature may be in less instructed people, and pleasing as it is to hear that men find time to look into even the lightest historical romances and scientific compendiums of the bookstalls, it is a shame

for this to be the only style and choice of reading of those who profess to be well educated persons. Flysheets and illustrated weeklies can never take the place of good books in the world's reading, without raising up a generation of triflers and empirics—of empty dogmatists and epicurean sceptics. Of sceptics as well as dogmatists; for while one class of people, from this course of reading, continued through years, will develop into desperate partizans, another, equally large, having learned just enough to know that there is something to be said for all forms of opinion by their professors, but not enough to enable them perfectly to master the principles or the evidence which should guide their decision between conflicting beliefs, feel unable to come to conclusions amidst the *mêlée*, and lapse into indifference or incredulity. Numbers of our fellow-countrymen are precisely in this condition of religious and political scepticism caused by half knowledge; but it is not so commonly remembered



that such half knowledge is the direct result of the prevalent habits of reading. Popular American superficiality is only a laughable exaggeration of our own.

‘But,’—perhaps some man will say,—‘you forget, in the midst of these disagreeable remarks on the quality of mercantile and fashionable reading, the existence of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, and of all the booksellers in the kingdom.’ By no means. These gentlemen undoubtedly exist and flourish, and some of them are among the benefactors of their age and country. But, unfortunately, booksellers and librarians cannot control the reading habits of the majority of their customers; and what I affirm is, that in the greater number of instances these habits are to the last degree slovenly and destructive of sound knowledge and thought. A constant series of books, good, bad, and indifferent, passes through the houses of subscribers to ‘societies’ and ‘select libraries,’ and these are hurried through, looked into, dipped into,

glanced over, in endless succession, by all but a very few, so that as nearly as possible they effect the destruction of the thinking power in these hungry cormorants of literature.

The pleasant genus of monthlies and quarterlies must come in for their full share of the blame. They assist idle people to attain a fallacious omniscience. They condense a science, a biography, a policy, into the brief limits of an article. They make mincemeat of leviathan, and distribute soup to the indigent made of the bones and sinews of behemoth. They hash up with sippets and sauce, to suit the taste of the indolent, the bodies of the old giants of history, and exchange the nutritious feast of oxen and fatlings which wisdom proclaims in the market-place for the frosted and sugared confections of an amusing *causerie*.

We see the result on all hands around us. In the want of serious purpose in life ; in the growth of a merely ornamental Christianity ; in grotesque and degrading mimicry of the middle ages ; in an obstinate assertion of

ceremonial laws, and an equal dislike for all Christian 'doctrines.' We see it in the frivolousness of evening company; in the audacious handling of a hundred subjects in an hour by beardless sophists, and a crowd of 'earnest' scorners under twenty; in the affectations of a throng too deeply taught by the universal spirit of 'nature' to have any special interest in the Christian religion, or in the Christian Church. We see it in the preaching which is popular, in that absurd pulpit 'hoo-hoo,' as Mr. Carlyle calls it, which is supposed appropriate to sacred subjects. We see it in the fact that 'cheek' is dominant in the church no less than in the world, on the rostrum no less than in the stock-exchange.* We see it still more clearly in the preaching which is *not* popular—that which consists in a steady explanation of the Scriptures, a custom which alone, in our age, is able to give the pulpit more authority than


* David seems to have enjoyed a firm conviction of the final overthrow of impudence in the Universe, when he sang, '*Thou shalt smite all Thine enemies upon the cheek-bone.*'

the press ; which places a direct message from Heaven, in the stead of a weekly dissertation from a mortal, and which necessitates thought, by applying a strong stimulus to the conscience.

There can be no hesitation in attributing a large part of these evils, which cause considerate men to groan in secret places, to the trifling quality of the reading of the men and women of this generation. It is not that there is a deficiency of good books ; it is not even that imaginative or periodical literature is too abundant, in comparison with more solid material. The fault is not nearly so much in the books as in the reading. It is the want of study of a few books which makes the reading of many books so dangerous. They come in succession so rapidly, that none leaves a permanent impression behind, as if wax kept constantly hot should be stamped with a perpetual succession of seals. The reading is not for profit, so much as for amusement ; and the natural result


is, that there is a growing distaste for manly discussion on the grand interests of politics and religion. Men will not be bored with that which they have learned to denounce as 'controversy.' Give them a pleasant story-book, a volume of travels, an exciting romance,—and the great questions on whose study England's old heroes nourished their intellect and their genius may go to the crows or the winds.

The bearing of this train of reflection on the reading of the most important Book in the world,—that book which is called in the Coronation service 'the world's greatest treasure'—is too obvious to escape observation. The Bible is wonderfully well diffused, and wonderfully little studied. We hear of millions of copies spread abroad in all languages; but one Bible opened and explained is worth the mere printing of a million. Now, the understanding of the Bible is not nearly so popular a process as the distribution of it. A British and Foreign Bible Society for



allowing] the book to speak for itself, and to be read otherwise than through the glasses of a too scholastic theology, would indeed create a commotion both at home and abroad. Yet earnest personal study of the Scriptures is surely the very end of their diffusion; and there is no book which requires so much and such peculiar attention to profit by it as the Bible.

The chief end of all reading in a world like this should be action; but decisive action depends upon the possession of principles; and when either there is no serious reading at all, no solemn and deliberate study of that book which is the fountain of principle and the source of truth—or where there is so large a proportion of reading for amusement that the reason and conscience are smothered in a bed of roses—but one result can accrue, whether to a man or a nation,—that men will become nearly blind to those things which are ‘unseen and eternal.’ The sensuous, the profitable, the entertaining, will



absorb their attention. Enthusiasm for truth, sacrifice for righteousness' sake, stern battle with Apollyon,—will be reckoned among the dramatic attractions of a bygone age, fit, indeed, to adorn in gilded pictures the walls of a modern drawing-room, but wholly unfit to mingle as realities with the substantial pleasures of modern life. And when that last state is reached, the day is at hand, when 'the Lord of Hosts will ride on a thunder-cloud into Egypt.'

CHAPTER XVII.

ON A WISE PASSIVENESS UNDER NATURAL INFLUENCES.

A BUSY London man, reposing at the sea-side, wrote the following letter, which I wish to insert, in order to enforce the above 'moral':—


'COAST OF KENT, NOON, *June*, 1864.

'Here I am quiet and alone at last. I have not been quiet for more than ten months. By day beset with the demands of my profession, I have not known during all that time the feeling of absolute repose, in the neighbourhood of the ever-rolling ocean of restless souls in Babylon—no, not for an hour! As a little girl said to me yesterday sitting on the sands, 'There is always, you know, something to do *next* in London; some tiresome history-lesson to learn, or mark

to avoid or gain.' And at night there is only partial cessation from noise and labour. Perfect silence is unknown. If you listen in the dark, there is either the hum or roar of the great city till long past the small hours; or later, a general sense of three millions of people sleeping and snoring in stuffy bed-chambers, or the scream of railway whistles and luggage-trains in the suburbs or the striking of a thousand church-clocks or the tramp of thieves or policemen, or the sensation of your being in the middle of a slumbering camp, just about to be awoken by the *réveille*. Thus the body and mind get tired to their inmost fibre, thought stagnates in the soul, which loses at last the power of enjoying either duty or pleasure. No Londoner knows how much noise is ever in his ears and fever in his heart until he reaches a spot like this.

'Well, here at last one has entered into rest. It is not a very distinguished watering-place, but thou shalt call nothing common or unclean.


I have walked several miles away from the little bathing-town along the high chalk cliff, and am lying on the sloping grassy summit of that cliff, near the edge, on a spot which looks dangerous enough to keep off all chance visitors. I have a volume of my old 'Wordsworth,' with its worn gilt-edges and blue-marbled cover, in my pocket, by which I find, as I looked into it coming along, that I remember (almost as well as when I scored them in the enthusiasm of youth) those glowing lines on the Education of the Solitary, in the first book of the *Excursion*. But who cares for books! Here is something to look at with more colour than paper and print. In this bright morning sun-light, under the soul-refreshing sky, in this blithe breeze of June that moves the tall loaded seed-vessels of the ripening grass, and the magnificent red tufts of the 'Sweet Betsey' toppling on the edge, everything looks beautiful around. The mind seems to go forth, and to become itself a part of nature. I turn my face, sea-smitten as I am,



round landward, and look for half an hour at the objects which happen to lie on the ground in the shadow of my 'wide-awake.' Here are some stalks of clover, and on them are climbing several tiny snails, with black and white banded shells. Has each one of these snail-minims, as our learned Michael affirms,* a 'heart' that beats over its little cares? Eighteen inches off is a bright yellow patch of vetches, which gave their name to Cicero, (perhaps only because he always carried one in his button-hole,) and remind you of Mr. Forsyth's recent memoir. Close beneath is a spider or attercop, as the Saxons called him, fighting and wickedly striving to entangle a little blackbeetle, with his tail turned up in rage and terror. If Joseph Sturge, whose life we were reading yesterday, were lying here, I suppose he would think it his duty to separate them; but, as I am not a Vice-President of the Peace Society, I shall allow


* The reference was to Michael Foster, M.D., late Assistant Lecturer at the Royal Institution, and then contributor to the *Christian Spectator*.

nature to fight it out, though truly sorry to see 'the war spirit' manifested even within this square yard of holiday ground. Will the millennium extend to insects? for they seem to be agitated by exactly the same contentious passions at present as France and Prussia, and greatly require moral reform. To the right there is a rich tuft of mallows, with the flowers hidden in the dewy shade of the fresh green leaves; and what a tint is on those sharp-edged lilac flowers! We have no names for the real colours of nature, except such rough and heathenish distinctions as red, brown, green, white, and black. Are these mallows a purple, a lilac, or a pink? They are *mauve* of course—which means mallows; and do not let us vex either them or ourselves by trying to give a more exact description. They will grow very well, and look never the worse, without settling the title of their robe of beauty. As the before-mentioned child said to me on the sands, 'Why cannot old people enjoy what they see without so much thinking and reasoning about it?'



‘Beyond the path, inland, is an immense thickly-planted field of wheat, now twelve inches high or thereabout. I reach and pull up one stalk. The clean flag-like blade waves in the sun-light and wind; the ear is now hidden in the stem; I unroll the wonderful envelope, for it needs not to be torn, and then the green inner garment, for that too unfolds; and there, down near the first joint, lies ensconced the thin and delicate ear, which will during the next month push its lengthening stalk up this hollow expansible tube, and at last, when strong enough, force its head out at the top; then drink in rain and golden sunbeams for six weeks, and so prepare to render of its life, as it bends its head to the sickle, ‘some good account at last,’—‘Here am I, and the thirty-fold which God hath given me.’

‘But here is a butterfly, with wings as blue as heaven’s own azure, hovering and quivering among the vetches and mallows; and there is another, with pale crimson pinions, among the



valerian. How different a life do they lead from that of my toil-worn fellow-citizens in London! One is disposed, at this moment, to envy their superiority to the petty distinctions of wheat-field and precipice, as they flash in beauty over the abyss through the sparkling air, the very images of the soul's existence in immortality. Yes, the soul shall have wings some day!


‘But now turn, poor Londoner, to receive on thy spirit, there to brighten again in dark December days among the contents of the memory's vast portfolio, the picture of this radiant coast and infinitely twinkling sea. To the right the cliff winds in a graceful line to a still higher promontory, crowned by a young wood, above which rises the pinnacle of the modern Nehemiah, who there holds his court, and begs of his God to ‘remember him’ for the good deeds which he has wrought towards the house of Israel in many lands. The sward, recently bathed by abundant showers, is green as emerald to the summit of the hill, and the

cliff descends, sheer, and straight, and white as becomes the coast-rampart of Albion. Still further to the right, the coast trends south and west, projecting with famous towns and populous villages into the sunny sea, and there, in the extreme distance beyond, is the visionary coast of France. How the inland eye feasts itself upon this luminous expansive sheet of channel waters! Again, and again, and again, after years of inland life, we come to this shore of England, but cannot grow weary of its waves and ripples, and far-stretching alternating bands of liquid amethyst and malachite and sapphire and opal, nor of its land-edging of white chalk cliff and golden sand. There are no sounds to be heard in this serene noontide silence except those which are more ancient than humanity. Behind me hovers—descending—the lark, pouring out over her nest that music to listen to which for the first time Americans rightly cross the Atlantic Ocean; and surely no lark ever sang a strain of more exquisite tenderness than

that with which she is now filling the air over the wheat-field, breathing forth the very soul of melody and love and joy into her nestlings hid in the ground. Around me winds the comfortable humble bee in velvet and gold, humming as he goes, as if to say—'Poor Dry-as-dust, quiet at last! We are always quiet out here!' And there, before and beneath, breaks in crisp and peaceful wavelets the rising tide, the most ancient and the most soothing of all earthly sounds. Thus it has risen and fallen ever since there was England; night and day, summer and winter, thus has it rolled over sand, and sea-weed, and broken rock; and thus has it shone since first the sun blazed in the new-made sky. Near inshore there are one or two white sails of fishing-boats, which give life to the prospect, and I almost fear that I heard a whistle from one of them—a human noise, five minutes ago. In mid-channel, and in the far horizon, two or three ships are working their way homewards, freighted, perhaps, with home-loving souls;

but, beautiful as these are, like diagrams against the translucent air, what are they to the sea! They pass quickly from view, and are seen no more—serving only to confirm the repose of the ‘mighty deep,’ which, most like its Almighty Author, ‘as it was in the beginning, is now,—and ever shall be, world without end.’ Well shall it be for us if, at the close of life’s busy season when the contests of the ages are ended, we shall find ourselves on a shore where the peace of this sunny morning shall deepen into the repose of eternity. And what will it be to listen with an heart whose aching is cured for aye to the breaking of the waves of that ocean of everlasting life whose tide shall no more go down!

‘But sadder thoughts begin to rise, and cast their shadow over this sun-light,—of those many companions departed since, many years ago, these marks were traced in the pages of him who lies beside the Rotha and beneath the yews of Grasmere; of bygone years, and months, and days, and nights, of



struggle, and toil, and conflict, in a ceaseless round ; of the soul that can find no rest in the world of sense ; of faults in labour in the time that lies behind us ; of fears for years to come. Therefore, since care and thought have found me, who had escaped them for a few hours, I will descend from this height by a slanting path to the shore, and march homeward,—trampling all the way the bladdered sea-weeds that explode under every footstep on the rocks and sands below.'

Reader—go thou and do likewise.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE DUTY OF SOMETIMES HEARING YOUR CHILDREN'S LESSONS.

THERE is but one method of making real progress in any particular knowledge, and that is by obtaining a complete mastery of its elements. And it is precisely stark ignorance at the very threshold, the failure to attain such complete mastery of the elements, which makes every successive step a toil and difficulty, and 'leaving school' so frequently to be regarded as a season for the throwing up of hats and the execution of dances in the air.

No one who numbers schoolboys among his acquaintances can doubt that the majority of these young gentlemen entertain by no means reverential feelings towards the Providence which permitted the writings of the Greeks and Romans to escape the ravages of time, and the conflagrations of antiquity.

There is nothing at which boys feel more astonishment than at the zeal with which the elder and therefore stronger portion of the race compel them to spend their jolliest years in making out such dry and intolerably difficult stuff as this ancient literature, in which every word is covered like a chrysalis with a tangled cocoon of inflections, and every sentence is perplexed by an arrangement of the parts, which seems to them to have been contrived by the very genius of vexation and disorder. So far from rejoicing in the glories of the Greeks and Romans, it is certain that most schoolboys sincerely wish that they had never lived; just as truly as one of them in my hearing once expressed his unsophisticated satisfaction when he heard that poor Mr. Kerchever Arnold was dead.


Now it is incontestable that much of this weary pain accompanying the process of a classical education arises from the fact that the majority of schoolboys never were thoroughly grounded in the first elements of Greek and

Latin, they never thoroughly knew the declensions, the conjugations, and the simpler rules of syntax. They are always halting in uncertainty from doubt, or consciously imperfect knowledge of some portion of the rudiments. Now it is the case or gender of a noun, now it is the tense of a passive verb, now it is a rule of that 'horrible subjunctive,' which is the subject of hesitation ; all of which are matters supposed to be perfectly mastered in the junior classes. But they never were mastered ; and the doubt goes up through successive stages, even perhaps to the height of the sixth form, entangling at every step the feet of the unhappy disciple, and preventing him from feeling that joy in his labour under the sun which belongs alone to the man who is master of the situation. It is all the same with his French, his German, his mathematics, his arithmetic, his history, and his geography. Progress in any one of these depends upon a thorough knowledge of the elements.

The examinations of the Government for

the civil service have revealed an amount of inexact education which should attract the attention of all who have sons to send forth to battle in a world where exact knowledge will always be power. Intellectual and practical habits generally go together—the one being the reflex of the other. Balaklava was the counterpart and outgrowth of the Harrow, Westminster, and Eton, of that day. That frightful chaos of mud, misery, and despair—of wreck, plague, waste, passion, and entanglement—of famishing heroism, ragged glory, and valour in the tatters of distress, was the natural adult development of spirits that at school and college learned nothing thoroughly.

What, then, are the causes of this perennial evil? First, (to lay the blame where most teachers mistakenly think that it is wholly due,) the common want of thoroughness in knowledge and the use of the faculties arises from the innate slothfulness and inattention of the majority of children, when left to their own devices. Now and then a disagreeable




studious child arises in a family with a natural aptitude for exact learning. It is born with a predisposition to accuracy, from some exquisite conformation of the brain ; it takes to cases, tenses, and mathematical arguments, as naturally as a young duck to the water, or a swallow to the air. The young scholar has a native ear for syntax, and feels the misery inflicted by a discord in construction as acutely as a worker on the score. But every one knows that this is far from being a true description of average boys and girls. These are by nature born, as Job observes, like the wild ass's colt, and are to be taught exactness only by a process analogous to that by which you would accustom a colt to equal paces and good behaviour in the shafts. Of course children differ largely in the measure of their natural application and accuracy of memory ; but it is certainly true, that if left to themselves the majority of them, dear creatures, will content themselves with 'general knowledge,' to the neglect of details and minute

particulars. And more than this, the process of reducing them to order, the task of immovably fixing in their minds a knowledge of those elemental forms of speech or argument on which all subsequent progress depends is one of the most trying labours to which the mind of man or woman can be directed.


The process of thoroughly instructing youth in the rudiments of the various knowledges immediately suggests images derived from all the more toilsome departments of the world of work. One thinks of the treadmill, of oakum-picking, of stone-breaking, of the crank, the hammer, and the beetle ; the thoughts of their own accord wander for an image by which to portray such labour as that of conscientiously teaching average brains in youth the liberal arts of music and grammatical construction in the learned tongues—to the functions of the stone-paviour ramming granite boulders into order upon the blocked thoroughfare—to the blacksmith smiting through a life-time of perspiration on his

anvil—to the navy for ever digging into and wheeling off mountains of mud and clay, to construct channels for the water, or railways on the land. But indeed there is no physical labour which aptly or sufficiently represents that of effectually beating conjugations into a moderately gifted booby, or time-scales and irregular French verbs, and the forms of negative interrogation, into a volatile lass. As to some modern pretences of teaching without any considerable labour on the part of either pupil or preceptor, no manner of faith is to be placed in them. ‘Multiplication *is* vexation; Division is as bad,’ and such ‘vexation’ is a good thing for the character. No amount of ‘chaff,’ in the shape of assurance that the Rule of Three is delightful, will entice these young birds into the steel-trap of scientific arithmetic. Heaven has not willed that mankind should acquire either exact knowledge, or the proper use of their mental faculties thence ensuing, otherwise than by a severe apprenticeship. There is



nothing for it but hard work ; and the greater number of heads will not work to advantage until the elements have been wrought into their understandings and memories by the strenuous persevering action upon them of a stronger older mind.

This brings me to the second cause of the common want of thoroughness in instruction—I mean the difficulty of finding persons who will expend the labour necessary to establish average children in a knowledge of the rudiments. Schools and school-masters are plentiful, and governesses are not very rare ; while in the present day a considerable number of these persons are endued with various accomplishments. But to know is one thing, to teach is quite another. Every intelligent man or woman loves an intelligent child ; but it is not every one who knows how to be patient with a youngster whose very soul loathes the declensions until he can say them, and whose nightly sleep acts in some degree like a diurnal Lethe upon the acquisitions of



the day. It is not every one who 'know Latin and Greek, French, German, and Euclid, that knows also how to accommodate the paces of his own mind to the slow movements and inelastic footsteps of the throng to whom school is a purgatory. Besides, there are many who can strike a good blow for one who can keep on hammering; and it is this genius for repetition in the teaching of the rudiments which is so uncommon and so necessary.

The less exactness and energy there are in a pupil, the more of these qualities must be put forth by the instructor, and there is no mesmerism so exhausting as this. Accordingly, no small proportion of those who are engaged in tuition shrink from the awful labour of thoroughly grounding their average disciples. To him that hath shall be given, is their rule of action; they cultivate the quick-witted brains, and leave the generality to their fate. Now, great respect is due to the duller slower portion of the boy and girl population. They usually turn out well and repay labour,

if they are so fortunate as to be brought in early life into the hands of a vigorous instructor. And one cannot but feel that a teacher ought to be as proud of rescuing an average soul from a barren mediocrity by his diligence, as of inspiring conspicuously able minds by his genius.

But such diligence is too commonly undervalued and underpaid. In public schools, the elementary classes are usually committed to men who, among mankind, stand in the same relation as pack-horses to racers. Any hack is thought, too frequently, good enough to teach the juniors ; and as the price of a hack alone is offered, nothing better can be expected for the money. Hence follows the common radical insufficiency of rudimentary instruction. Intelligent perseverance requires mind, and mind will fetch money. Larger salaries ought to be given to the teachers of the elements, and altogether a higher order of persons employed upon the work of grinding. The adoption of this measure would imme-

diately be felt throughout the whole succeeding course of instruction. Indeed, the first subject of inquiry in school examination ought uniformly to be the quality of the elementary teaching. In the structure of the Houses of Parliament and of the Arc d'Etoile the substructions are nearly as deep underground as the edifices are high above the surface—and the foundations of adult thought ought to be laid thus solidly in the thoroughness of a school education. Happy are the parents who have found for their children so priceless a blessing as a careful and conscientious teacher. The habit of exactness acquired in youth is seldom lost. It passes from the memory into the judgment and reason, and thence frequently into the conscience.

The third cause of that imperfect school training which leads to so many after evils, is the ignorant desire of parents for show, quantity, and variety, rather than for soundness in attainment.

It is not every human creature who has a clear idea of what he wants when he sends a son or daughter to school. And of those who do know what they want, many want the wrong thing. Some send their children to school simply to get rid of them ; others because the school is conveniently near at hand, although the instruction given may be nearly worthless. Others will send their boys to a person who has a reputation for carrying youth rapidly forward, either in classics or mathematics. The majority of parents are more pleased to hear that their children are reading Euripides and Horace than that they are thoroughly learning the grammar, which would enable them to read with profit. Not many are contented with a little perfectly mastered, understanding that the object of school education is the training of the faculties to habits of exactness, as the instruments of all future acquisition and activity. Thus encouraged, the teacher sinks into indolence, and the pupil passes from subject to subject,

from class to class, consciously building on the sand, until he leaves school and 'finishes his education' with a head full of half-knowledge and a hand untrained for every strenuous work. The dear boy who returns in this condition to the parental roof, is in a fair way to grow up with a fixed taste for superficial acquirements, and with that unlimited conceit in his own judgment which is the peculiar characteristic of the swell, the dandy, and the buffoon. The father wonders why the expenditure of so much money has not ended, at least, in the power of speaking a French sentence correctly, or in a steady taste for some description of useful reading or polite accomplishment. But no. The poor youth was never sufficiently master of the rudiments of any branch of learning to be able to take a hearty interest in the process of building thereon. The invaluable season of boyhood has passed away when the drudgery of elementary learning is best endured, when the memory is retentive, and the organs of speech

pliable, and now it is too late to begin again. He must grow up as he best can, and find, in the necessary accuracy of business, a rough substitute for the training which could have been gained before. If that fails, there is no prospect but that he will grow up a duffer. He may be a rich man; may become a churchwarden, or a deacon, managing director, and hold a seat in college councils and boards of control; but he will continue, in spite of these ill-gained honors and orders, to carry within him a soul void of clear and conscientious convictions, void of beliefs gained by personal investigation, and devoid of the power which would deliver him from becoming the bonds slave of the multitude; and the time-serving repeater of its cries. Therefore, my dear reader, let us sometimes hear our children their lessons.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE DUTY OF TRYING TO REASON FAIRLY-

THOSE who have made a special study of the art of reasoning are said to entertain but a moderate estimate of the value of the logical processes by which popular opinion reaches its conclusions in religion, politics, and social life. And this estimate is not greatly exalted, even in relation to good persons, by a view of the methods of argument prevailing among many of those who profess a particular interest in the knowledge of truth. The theory of Protestantism is that men shall hold doctrines and maintain customs as the result of investigation; the practice of the generality of Protestants is too often to receive a whole system of belief by tradition alone, and to resist equally being reasoned into or out of any of their opinions.

The less reason, moreover, men have for

their creeds, the more are they usually dependent on passion and obstinate assertion for their support; and accordingly there is no human employment ordinarily considered more hopeless than that of attempting to change the belief of men either on fundamentals or secondaries. When people have not been reasoned into their opinions they can seldom be reasoned out of them. When they are conscious of inability to defend their notions by solid argument, they defend them by little misrepresentations, by dogmatism, by menace, by anathema, and are prone to think that all weapons are sanctified by the purposes of the conflict. After a little experience of life, therefore, there are few things from which a considerate man, however fond of fencing, more earnestly shrinks than from anything approaching to a direct discussion with the majority of his neighbours. He knows that they are unable to reason correctly, and that many of them have no desire to argue fairly; that nearly all of them will

supply the lack of evidence by bold repeated assertions of the very thing which ought to be proved, and that only a few will be able to command their temper when questioned on the grounds of their convictions.


To a man of forty years of age, it generally appears a Quixotic enterprise to commence an argument for the purpose of reasoning a Churchman out of Episcopacy, a Scotchman out of Presbyterianism, a Wesleyan out of implicit faith in John Wesley, an Independent out of his one-man system, or a Baptist out of faith in the exclusive validity of immersion. It is an understood thing between all parties that they shall not plague one another with questions and controversies, the generality being conscious of small preparation for a trial of their opinion by jury, and by a examination of the evidence. So far as exact study of the articles of religion in their individuality is concerned, there is no reason to think that the Protestant north of Europe greatly excels the Roman Catholic south.

People are well aware that the study of truth is a toilsome and thorny business, and since Christendom is constituted in sects and parties, they readily foresee that a change of opinion might compel the abandonment of old connections and present interests; they therefore keep out of harm's way, and seldom exercise their minds on matters which threaten destruction to their repose, and possibly ruin to their worldly prospects. This is, indeed, a strange and sad commentary upon the maxims, that we should prove all things,' and that 'every man should be thoroughly persuaded in his own mind.'

A habit of credulous assent even to indisputable truths is inconsistent with a life of much practical earnestness. When a man's 'faith' is not founded on rational conviction, and is not the result of some honest examination of evidence, it exerts but a slight influence on his thoughts. He who has carefully studied for himself the grounds of even a single

article of his belief, will ever afterwards entertain feelings of dissatisfaction respecting the articles which have not been similarly examined, and will form a habit of demanding evidence for the dogmas of popular faith ; and he will have learned to estimate at its worth the easy assent of five out of ten of both clergy and laity to whatever is brought before them with an air of authority and a claim to antiquity.

It would not be easy in a small space to delineate the arts of sophistication practised by good men who have a general desire to be right, but are deficient in the honest inquiry which alone can secure their position. Nothing is more characteristic of a man than his mode of disputing, both in attack and defence. It is delightful to listen to the argument of a fair and well-informed reasoner ; while it moves indignation to watch the tactics of those whose only notion of debate is to say something which shall puzzle an antagonist, or serve the purpose of tem-



porarily warding off defeat. The following are a few of the arts of self-defence resorted to by those who have either bad causes to defend, or who have the misfortune not to know how to maintain good causes except with bad weapons :—

1. Such persons take no notice of evidence leading in a direction contrary to that which is desired. They may be said to argue in blinkers. They pretend to see nothing which tells against them. This is a common characteristic of devout but dexterous antagonists both male and female. They take no notice whatever of the chief arguments directed against their position, and devote all their strength to some minor details. Thus you will generally find that when men have a bad cause, it is well-nigh impossible to persuade them to deal with the chief reasons that are alleged against it.

2. Others again, when hard pressed, allege the bad moral effect of controversy on what they are pleased to call their Soul, and repre-

sent all who are anxious for discussion as restless and turbulent spirits, desirous to communicate their own disordered condition to others. But, in fact, one chief sign of the possession and of the love of truth is a desire to advance its influence. And though there are, doubtless, some minds that love argument better than truth, all lovers of truth *must love argument* so long as there are errors to be overthrown thereby. The apostle 'disputed daily' in the market-places and the synagogues; and never since their time has there been an age when the same uncomfortable process was required, both in church and state, more than in our own.


3. A third device is, to resent any criticism offered upon a single portion of any theological or political system, as an evidence of diabolical hostility to all that is good in it besides. If Stephen exposes the hollowness of Pharisaic Judaism, he has 'spoken words against Moses and against God,' and must be stoned for his temerity. Thus, in modern

imes, if you venture upon a few observations on the ceremonies or the credenda of any church, you are convicted thereby of being an enemy to its prosperity. If your observations are directed to the party to which you do not belong, you are a white-livered bigot. If it be your own church, you are a dangerous friend. You are expected, in the latter case, to adopt all the opinions and customs of your own section, without question and without exception. 'It is an ill bird,' you are told, 'that fouls its own nest.' You must receive all or none of the traditions. If you do not accept the definitions and the combinations of your party, you are crotchety. No man must be permitted to meditate upon the articles of his belief one by one. They must be absorbed at once, and in one system,—just as the boa constrictor swallows a goat at the beginning of the year, which is to last him for the remainder of the twelvemonth.

This is the style of thinking which, from its commonness, confounds honest men. They

know not where to go for a church or a city of refuge. On all sides you are met with demands for assent to a number of impossible conclusions, or to compliance with a number of contradictory details. Every sect has its Act of Uniformity, and the sectarian leaders earn their position and authority by being the little Sheldons of the combination. There will be no public spiritual freedom in England until, in each communion, the wire-pullers are exposed and the spirit of imposition has been overthrown.

4. Another characteristic of a multitude of people is their mode of argument by false imputation, when compelled to defend any of their superstitions. They frequently remind you of Apollyon, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' straddling across the road, breathing forth flame, and brandishing fiery darts against the advancing travellers. Not having adopted their own opinion as the result of inquiry, such zealots cannot sympathise with those who have thus reached their conclusions; and



since they are conscious of inability to defend their position by evidence, they are enraged at those who seek to endanger the repose of credulity. It is always easier to join in a cry of 'mad dog,' 'thief,' or 'heretic,' than it is to show in order the grounds of our own opinion. The custom is, therefore, to exaggerate and caricature the doctrine which they seek to oppose. If you advocate freedom and independence, then you are a Democrat and a Leveller. If you desire more combination in action, then you are a Centralizing Bureaucrat. If you object to some expressions in the Athanasian Creed, then you are a Unitarian. If you question some of the positions of Calvin, then you deny the grace of God. If you maintain that mere notions on justification by faith will profit no one, then you are an enemy of the 'simple Gospel.' If you question the dogma of the absolute inspiration of every word in the English Bible, then you are an Infidel. If you say a word for the study of Nature, then you are an enemy of Revela-

tion. In fact, the zeal for God of an immense multitude of people must be exactly such as would commend them to Beelzebub, if he were the Divinity. They are full of the spirit of injustice and misrepresentation.


One desires for persons of this description, so common in every thoroughfare, the perpetual and uncomfortable pursuit of some modern Socrates, who should think it worth his pains to expose and confound and chastise this pretentious irrational orthodoxy. To put the Pharisees to silence is sometimes quite as important as to stop the mouths of Sadducees, for whatever hinders the study of truth is injurious to mankind; and nothing hinders it more heinously than such a spirit of unreasoning anathema either in the ignorant crowd or their half-learned leaders. To 'tell a lie for God, to gratify him,' will prove to have been as dangerous a strategy at the great day, in this nineteenth century, as in the days of old.

It will be argued, in reply to the preceding unpleasant observations, that we are expecting

too much from the generality when we require them to be careful students of the evidence of their beliefs, and of the reasons of their customs and preferences ; that popular beliefs, even on the most important subjects, can be reached only by rough processes of induction ; that much must necessarily be left to the influence of association, authority, instinct, and social example ; that in so rude a world truth can be defended only in large masses : and that a little clamour in support of the truth is better than a great deal of heretical opposition to it.

We do not deny that there is something in every one of these considerations—especially in the last. The ass, when not inspired like Balaam's, must defend himself by his heels if the people have not been sufficiently frightened away by his bray ; and, with all his faults, who does not love and honour a good honest donkey that gets through a lifetime of hard work, even if it be by the aid of a limited power of speculation ?

But although there is every reason to recognise the worth of numbers who believe many things rightly by instinct, and defend them, when attacked, with foolish noises and much recalcitrant zealotry, it is not well to attempt to establish such modes of believing, and such methods of defence, as the normal example in religion or politics. It still remains true that the cause of truth is the cause of fair argument, of sound induction, of correct inference, and not of partisan superstitions. It is still desirable, while a teacher of the people should patiently imitate John Huss in his noble exclamation, at witnessing a devout old woman throw a faggot on to his burning pile, 'O sancta Simplicitas!' that he should also persist in subjecting popular doctrines and practices to the test of a searching trial, even at the risk of the fire. There must needs be much 'holy simplicity' which reasons roughly and wrongly; but that is only another argument why *as many as possible* should be brought to reason rightly, since 'holy sim-



city' is too frequently ready with its faggots
l its flames. Let us not be weary, then, in
ll-doing; and one part of well-doing is to
son correctly, and to put bad logic to shame.
in this endeavour we be saluted with the
, 'These men who turn the world upside
vn are come hither also!' let it be remem-
ed—in the words of Robert Hall—that
e evils of controversy are all transitory,
lle its benefits are all permanent.'

CHAPTER XX.

ON ATTENTION TO THE FESTIVE ELEMENT IN LIFE.

THE children of men, like other young animals, have a prescriptive right to spend all their time in amusing themselves if they like it. Among the living creatures play seems to have been far more ancient than work. 'There is that leviathan,' says David, whom God 'made to play' in the primeval ocean, long ere man bowed the neck of the ox to his yoke in the furrow, or subjugated the horse, the elephant, the camel, or the dog, to his dominion for the purposes of peace or war. The life of the animals must have become more serious with the successive worlds, until now it too often groans under its burdens. The trains of camels that pass heavily laden through the broad Asiatic deserts echo the European sighs of the horses that drag omnibuses from morning

till night over the stones of London and Paris, executing the behests of a sleeplessly toiling generation. But it must have been a joyful gamesome life of old, that life of the early shrimps and saurians—those vast lizards, now reduced to fossils, with eyes that once blazed like coach-lamps in the darkness of the ancient night—with green and glittering scales that shone resplendent in primeval morning! They had a merry time of it no doubt, with ‘hearts as firm as rocks,’ and eyelids as the glancings of the dawn. To crunch trilobites in the mud—to bask on sea-beaches or river-banks, among enormous grasses, reeds and osiers—to snap their cheerful jaws upon a salmon, a lobster, or an oyster, and to live perhaps for several centuries, gives no very strong impression of earnest business or of melancholy work. The earth was theirs, and they ‘played therein.’ There was no destructive being then upon the shore to trouble their repose with harpoon, hook, or rifle. ‘In their necks

remained strength, and sorrow was turned into joy before them.'

And play is still, to a great extent, the life of the animals who have escaped the dominion of man. The lark sings triumphantly above this weary world of business, and the groves are vocal with the melody of thrushes, or bright with the flashing plumage of humming birds, enjoying themselves in the air and sunshine. The old house-dog, versant in human society, has an air of solemn responsibility upon his countenance; but the young kitten, fresh from nature's hand, unsophisticated by long intercourse with anxious mankind, runs after its own tail in a ceaseless gyration of gladness, or dances after a tassel or a bell-rope, in a manner which throws a wonderful light on the character of the Universal Creator.

Natural play, however, reaches its perfection and lovely climax in the pleasures of our own infancy and childhood. The earliest development of the soul is in play, and the

earliest life is nothing but amusement. 'Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home—heaven shines about us in our infancy;' but the divine beginning of life, like the ocean in the sun, is dimpled with a universal smile. Look at that little maiden of three years old;

‘Loving she is, and tractable, though wild;
And innocence hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks, and laughing eyes,
And feats of cunning, and the pretty round
Of trespasses, affected to provoke
Mock chastisement and partnership in play.
And as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,
Even so this happy creature of herself
Is all sufficient; solitude to her
Is blithe society, who fills the air
With gladness and involuntary songs.’

Look at those pretty men and women, of four and five, in the sunshine of spring, now castle-building, now busy with nail and hammer, now running, now swinging on the gate, now making feasts of gravel in the summer-house, or piles of white blossom on the green grass;

now begging hard for 'stories,' or repeating for the thousandth time snatches of a half-learned tune; now filling the air with what old Homer calls 'inextinguishable laughter' and shouts of sinless merriment!

'Can you tell me, Child, Who made you?' say we, with true desire that the child should know. It was He who was 'the happy God' from eternity, as S. Paul terms Him, and who looks down upon the children of men at play, with a zeal of fatherly delight as intense at least as that with which He surveys the lightning flight of archangels from star to star.

But if amusement is the natural occupation of a child, work you will say is the main business designed for a woman or a man. Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, not to lead a simply contemplative life, much less to wander like dreaming lovers among the roses and jessamines, but to 'dress it and to keep it.' They were to be king and queen of the world, and they were to worship high Heaven, but they were also to be dili-



gent gardeners. When they sinned, they were punished by being compelled to work harder. The 'curse' was not work, but *severer* labour than would have been necessary under the original constitution of things. And ever since, the world has been a vast reformatory, where millions of the human race are consigned to labours more or less oppressive as the condition of existence. The revolving earth is of the nature of a treadmill in a House of Correction.

A wonderful Providence has contrived the serious occupations of mankind in the various countries of the world, and in the successive stages of civilization. The business of providing food, clothing, and shelter, of rearing children, and maintaining public order and security, sets in motion, and keeps in constant activity, the larger proportion of the human race. Innumerable millions find their daily work and daily bread in agriculture, manufactures, and the arts of building. Mines, fields, forests, oceans, swarm with the toiling

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 comprehends the useful and the beautiful, by
 and both alike are conjoined in sacred symbol
 with the true and the holy.

Say not, 'Surely every man walketh in
 a vain show,'—especially the girls. Every
 thing in nature is for 'glory and for beauty,'
 as well as for use ; and man in his 'fine arts,'
 and 'arts of design,' is working as an imitator,
 according to the model set before him by his
 Sovereign Lord. If, therefore, it be lawful
 to make a fabric in calico or in silk, it is
 equally lawful to stamp it with a beautiful
 pattern, or to dye it of a beautiful colour ;
 and the same argument is valid for all the
 arts of ornamentation ; especially for those

myriads; and none will doubt that these labourers are engaged in lawful callings. The absolute wants of the world are made the springs of its activity. Much pleasure is connected by a merciful arrangement with the prosecution of these wholesome labours, as well as with the enjoyment of their results.

But that which I wish to point out to you, my broad-brimmed Friend, is that the world has not been made on Friends' principles, and that God has clearly willed the arts of ornamentation to accompany the arts of utility, so that a considerable fraction of mankind finds a lawful maintenance in the prosecution of these finer labours. The production of the means of enjoyment, over and above the simple means of living, is clearly comprehended in the Divine plan for the work of the world. The constitution of the mind, seeking for a good higher than any which the bodily faculties can supply, conspires with the constitution of nature itself to raise up many classes of labourers in the sphere

of the beautiful to supplement and adorn the utilities. The God who orders a brazen pillar for the temple, orders it also, as saith the beloved Trinal, to be crowned with lily-work. The purple curtains are to be embroidered with palm-trees and cherubim. The vail is to be dyed in the colours of the eastern sky. The inspiration of Bezaleel comprehends the useful and the beautiful; and both alike are conjoined in sacred symbol with the true and the holy.

Say not, 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show,'—especially the girls. Every thing in nature is for 'glory and for beauty,' as well as for use; and man in his 'fine arts,' and 'arts of design,' is working as an imitator, according to the model set before him by his Sovereign Lord. If, therefore, it be lawful to make a fabric in calico or in silk, it is equally lawful to stamp it with a beautiful pattern, or to dye it of a beautiful colour; and the same argument is valid for all the arts of ornamentation; especially for those

finest arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, which are the fountains of the rest. Workers then in the sphere of beauty and delight are not idlers, even if they are dress-makers. God has willed that life, even to erring beings, should partake of enjoyment and refinement, and since it is plain that much of this enjoyment comes from the mind, rather than from the grosser senses, it follows that the occupations which adorn life are as heavenly callings as those which merely preserve it.


Success and proficiency in any of these spheres of work are dependent upon hard labour; and the true doctrine is, that no one has any right to amusement, properly so called, who does not earn it by diligent application. This diligent application may be directed to the satisfaction of the wants of human society, in the physical, the intellectual, or moral departments; it may be expended in the sphere of the simply useful, or in that of the beautiful, or in that of the

scientific, or in that of the moral and spiritual ; but work of some kind for the world's good is demanded of every one who eats the bread which the earth brings forth ; and if there be no work, there ought to be no play.

The advance of civilization has raised large numbers above the necessity of working with their own hands for their living. The majority have still to fight with death day by day for their very life. If they cease to toil, they will immediately starve and perish. The king of terrors carries them off directly that they cease to battle with him by their manual industry. But the result of the toils of these hard-worked myriads is to secure ease and competence for a minority. And the duty which these favoured classes owe to those by whose physical labours they are exempted from toil, is to devote their leisure, and their consequent superior cultivation, to the elevation and comfort of the 'working classes,' in relation both to the world that now is, and that which is to come.


Much happiness is annexed to honest exertion in every department of all this labour; all who work healthily must find a certain measure of enjoyment in their daily toil. Captain Basil Hall says that even on ship-board the real and permanent pleasures of life lie close alongside of its duties. Happiness depends far more on the state of that which is within us than upon the accident of that which is around us. It is, therefore, an unwholesome condition of mind which distinguishes by a very sharp line work from pleasure or play. In nearly all occupations there is some intrinsic delight available, and more obtainable by the bye. In household duties, in the rearing and education of children, in most forms of business, a rich fund of pleasure accompanies exertion. If the road be sometimes difficult and dusty yet flowers grow by the roadside, and wisdom will lead us to depend as much as possible for our happiness upon the multitude of small pleasures that accompany daily duty.

It is, nevertheless, to be confessed that modern civilization has deprived some forms of toil of much of the enjoyment that sprang from labour in the earlier stages of society. It is not nearly so pleasant to watch and follow the movements to and fro of a cotton frame on the crowded floors of a Manchester factory, as it was of old to 'sit by the fire and spin,' before steam-engines were invented. It can scarcely be regarded as a delightful occupation for a young man to spend his time from morning to night amidst the stupifying labours of a modern drapery establishment; or for a young woman to wear out her best years in the artifices of fashionable millinery and dressmaking. Multitudes are immured in close rooms and factories, in shops and counting-houses; and the original curse of hard work has descended with double weight upon the 'age of great cities.' For all such persons, wearied with daily toil, it is natural that a somewhat broad distinction should be made between labour and pleasure, exertion



and amusement ; and if the hours of leisure be spent with a due regard to other claims, it is undeniable that nature pleads for, and religion commands recreation. A large part of the world is very weary with work, and Heaven itself has provided that jaded spirits shall be gladdened by relaxation.

Attend therefore to the red-letter days in the Calendar. If your domicile is quite solitary afford yourself a half-holiday at least twice in the week. If you live in a family, every now and then move a resolution for a gala-day. If you are a father, allow your eldest son an occasional kid, that he may make merry with his friends, and so find no excuse for grumbling out of doors, when you proclaim a festival on occasion of the prodigal's return. Break the even course of your daughter's life-stream by the slight waterfall of an evening party. Keep with a bright countenance the natural feasts of both earth and heaven—birth-days, wedding-days, and summer pic-nics. If you are a master or mistress,



remember how you would feel if you were a servant or apprentice, and had no holidays. Do something to gladden the weary eye of industry in warehouses, and make the widow's and the poor scholar's heart to sing for joy. Arrange a banquet at Christmas for the halt and the lame. You may even hire a fiddle and a tambourine and institute a little dance, for the refreshment of youth, provided the merry-making is not spoiled (as most dances are spoiled in our day) by lamentable approaches to the heathenish Nubian style in feminine attire, and provided always that the hop is over soon after the usual bed-time. You need not be of a 'sad countenance' or, as it is in the Greek, put on the 'visage of a Scythian,' or a Hun, and refuse all festivities just because many people are such fools that they are not contented unless lawful things are done in an unlawful way, and amusement is degraded into revelry. Sometimes then set the fashion instead of following it.

If any man bid thee to a feast sometimes be disposed to go. Dining in company may be regarded as a divine institution. There is only one thing better—supper, to which a few intelligent associates sit down; but this is denied by the physicians. Cookery, and the ornamentation of the table with flowers, as conducive to a truly human companionship, is a worthy science. Let Soyer's art be honoured among all men. Women of the middle ranks, who care for none of the culinary mysteries, ought to remain singly blessed. Cookery distinguishes mankind from the beasts that perish. If working men's wives cooked with more skill, their husbands would have one more attraction to their homes. Happy is the woman whose daily table is the work of thought; whose festive genius and goodness shine like a domestic glory, not only over a sirloin or a salmon, but over a hash and a working-day pie. Her household shall rise up and call her blessed. Since men pass so much of their

time in eating it is piteous when the culinary art is neglected in the course of girls' education. Let them, as S. Peter says, imitate Sarah. Let them see how that venerable princess went quickly at Abraham's exhortation to her kneading-trough and oven, and prepared an extempore collation of cakes and pilau for the angels. How few ladies, whether Gentiles or Jewesses, could in the present day do the like.

And if you are a young man do not neglect games of agility and strength. In the education of antiquity these formed a large part of the process of early instruction. We think more of the mind, they regarded mainly the accomplishments of the body. Nothing indeed can be more absurd than the extravagant devotion to muscular pursuits in the English Universities, against which all good teachers are now exclaiming with suitable alarm and indignation. But it is by no means certain that it would be a bad thing if regular physical training and exercise formed a more

considerable object in the ordinary school curriculum. At fourteen and thereabouts, boys and girls are, in the French phrase, great consumers, and it is precisely at that age that a well-directed course of physical discipline would, in most cases, obviate the dangers of stagnation. Many a dull brain might be quickened into activity and a festive strength by a supply of healthier blood ; and the vaulting pole and the gymnastic machine would do much towards the production of such blood in the generality. If prizes, as of old, were offered for the best runners, cricketers, leapers, fencers, and the like, it is by no means clear that the world would not be as much advanced as by rewarding only the best manufacturers of Latin exercises. The possession of steel nerves and muscles is a grand step towards the possession of a sound understanding and straightforward character. This is true of all ages ; vigorous bodily exercise assists circulation, digestion, nutrition.


Not many 'souls' will be really saved,



until more attention is given to the salvation of bodies. There is no greater evil than the common pulpit-habit of addressing men as if they were disembodied spirits. The physics of spiritual religion lie at the basis of true goodness. A one-sided spiritual Christianity is in its way as dangerous as a one-sided material heathenism. A large part of virtue consists in doing the right things with our own bodies, and towards the bodies of others. The modern church has 'waxed fat and kicked.' Jeshurun requires an active course of depletion. The fact that the Pharisees 'fasted twice in the week' is no reason for 'faring sumptuously every day.' Eyes that stand out with fatness cannot see rightly either earth or heaven. Of what use is it to teach mere doctrines to full-blooded youths who require cold bathing, cool sleeping, hard labour, and early rising. Or who can expect to convert a 'male Sunday school teacher' into a man and a Christian, so long as he never walks above two miles at a

stretch, yet feeds himself heavily every day at noon and night. S. Paul distinctly maintains that 'training' is as essential for the Olympia of the soul as for that of the body. The modern clerical character is an artificial development of humanity, and is but imperfectly qualified to educate a complex nature, which contains other faculties and passions besides those for hearing sacred music and sermons. Every medical man can bear witness to the mysteries of iniquity which often underlie a merely doctrinal piety. 'Bodily exercise' profiteth little in the antics of a priestly ceremonial, but it profiteth much in the literal sense of the words in 'crucifying the flesh' and strengthening the understanding.

It is not schoolboys alone who would be improved in tone by a more systematic prosecution of athletic games and military exercises, made obligatory upon all except weaklings. Young men in shops and counting-houses might be redeemed from the passion for bad tobacco, and from vacuity of thought, by




a similar discipline. Even persons in much graver employments might perhaps occasionally with advantage to character and good feeling be led forth to feats of vigorous exertion. How certainly a game at fives or skittles once a week would regulate the biliary and theological secretions of some of our contemporaries. If both Houses of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury were—(will the reader make a strong effort and forgive the seeming irreverence of the proposal)—even once a-year—to play at football in a lay dress with the Wesleyan Conference or the Congregational Union, they would be enabled more readily to obey the injunction that we should put off the ‘old man’ and the ‘old woman’ (old wives’ fables) and ‘put on bowels of meekness and humbleness of mind.’ There is nothing more fatal to national health or Catholic Christianity than the influence of a sedentary and bilious priesthood, which is certain to become vixenish, exclusive, irritable, and full

of a false dignity. There are few things more to be desired than wholesome exercise in the open air for both the shepherds and the sheep. It assists the promotion of that childlike spirit which is the best preparation for entrance into other worlds, where, it may be expected, the clerical character will be abolished.

On the whole it is proper to add that the farther our entertainments are from the artificial, the more permanent will they become. Life kindles and satisfies in proportion as it becomes pure. In a better state of society many things will become safe, which now from their surroundings fill a thoughtful soul with timidity. In the last days, saith the prophet, Jerusalem *'shall be rebuilt by Jehovah; she shall be adorned with tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together, for God will turn their mourning into joy, and*


will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.' Jer. xxxi. When the prodigal gentile world returns to its Rest, the Father's house shall be filled with 'music and dancing.' These things are not wrong in themselves. But so wide-spread is the spirit of revelling now prevailing,—so reckless the merriment of the myriads who will soon, if Christianity be true, make an awful exchange of their laughter,—so urgent the work of self-culture, that is to be wrought within the brief space of mortal life, that we are compelled to allow, while acknowledging there are some who may require to be urged to give festivals their due, that there are more who require to be warned that their vain lives will end in sorrow.



CHAPTER XXI.

ON FIRESIDE AMENITIES, OR THOROUGHNESS IN HOME AFFECTION.

SOME men seem to have lost all passion, to be, in effect, 'past feeling.' In them the light of intellect appears like a flame burning in the eyes of a skeleton, cold and grim. Thus is Cavendish described by Wilson: 'He did not love, he did not hate, he did not hope, he did not fear, he did not worship, as others do. He separated himself from other men, and apparently from God. There was nothing earnest, enthusiastic, heroic, or chivalrous in his nature. An intellectual head thinking, a pair of wonderfully acute eyes observing, a pair of skilful hands experimenting or recording, are all that you realize in reading his memorials. His brain seems to have been but a calculating engine; his eyes inlets of vision, not fountains of




tears ; his hands instruments of manipulation which never clasped together in adoration ; his heart only an anatomical organ for the circulation of the blood.' Surely this was not the sort of man intended to dwell on this planet.

And such is not the general character of mankind. All are defective in the strength of the noblest affections, but scarcely any two persons in the same degree. Nothing is more characteristic of people than their natural temperature. One of the first things that strikes you in coming into contact with a stranger, next to the measure of his understanding, is the warmth or coldness of his constitution. Some whole nations and races are cold-blooded, reserved, adamantine. Others are kind, affectionate, and demonstrative. This is true, also, of clans.

There are some families with whom it is a pleasure even to shake hands ; whose radiant faces it is worth much exertion in walking even to look upon ; whose sincere


and ringing laugh, like jubilant music, in both young men and maidens, parents and children, it is worth a journey to listen to. Even transitory contact with them does you good. A fine virtue goes out of them. In their gardens the flowers look brighter than elsewhere; in their homes the very kettle seems to sing with a more conscious gladness, the servants bear a silver yoke, the canary is inspired with a more golden strain, the pictures gleam upon the walls with a more sunny glow. There the surviving memorials of early love, and the bridal gifts which have escaped the accidents of time, are not the sad remainders of a tenderness that has vanished amidst the tempests of life, but monuments of a love which has strengthened and mellowed amid sunshine and storms. In such houses affection has added a grace to culture by spreading over it the enamel of a self-denying friendship. The husband and wife, the brothers and sisters, the mistress and the maidens, seem to live in an atmosphere



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of mutual consideration and regard. Violence is not heard within their gates, wasting nor destruction within their borders. If slight wounds are given, the flesh heals easily, for love is in the blood. The chief pleasure of life seems to be to give pleasure, the chief regret to have inflicted pain. Sometimes one blessed marriage made in heaven lays the foundation of happiness such as this for several generations. Affectionate and gentle manners become hereditary. One radiant fragrant rose grafted on the family tree, one sweet flower of wedded womanhood, communicates to it a gracious beauty from age to age. Life becomes less of a burden, because its weight is shared by willing shoulders, and death is not so terrible, because, at the embarkation of each voyager on that mysterious ocean, so many loving companions 'accompany him to the ship.'

But we must not dream thus of the scenes within all the ten thousand doors that we pass in our daily rounds. When some of




those doors are opened you hear the reverberations of a domestic tempest, for the daily life of the inmates is passed in interminable war. The so-called 'love' of courtship, which never was based on intelligence or esteem, has been succeeded by a wedlock which is the enforced cohabitation of enemies, the fierce antipathy of two vindictive spirits ever contemplating one another's defects. But who shall describe the law of domestic storms, or foretell the movement of the cyclone which 'fills the whole house' with a whirlwind from beneath, on whose fell gyrations are borne spirits that curse each rising sun, and at whose centre revolves some soul that lives upon the agony that it inflicts? But that we are forbid to tell the secrets of the prison-house, what histories of woe might not any one unfold who had professionally visited, like Dante in vision, the spiral depths of the domestic Inferno!

Here lives an adder of a woman, very moral and religious, but with a tongue like a

poisoned dagger ; whose fatal eloquence in lecturing and reproof is awakened, in some states of her disorder, by almost each movement of her husband, her children, and her dependents. The darkest suspicions are common diet. Every affection has long ago been worn threadbare—nay, the very garment of affection is worn through, and the flesh is plucked from the bones by hot pincers of malicious wrath and wisdom. The calm and skilful tormentor, gangrened with her bilious intelligence, and swelling with a passion which no earthly power can quell, inflicts perpetual strokes which tattoo with scars of mortification the miserable companions of her home. Every meal tastes as if it were poisoned. The air is loaded with gloom, and at night unquiet slumbers only prepare again Ixion for his wheel.

And there, too, dwells a domestic tyrant, falsely denominated a man, worthy of the territory of Dahomey. A wife, originally of fair temper and spirits, is crushed into sullen


sorrow by the ceaseless agitation of her lord and master. He wakes in reprimands and reproaches; he 'eats his meat' with petulance and discontent; and he closes the day in wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness. The many trials of a woman's life are unlightened by a word of sympathy, or a hand of help; she is hated for the expenses of housekeeping, persecuted for the wear of furniture, assailed at every point for her taste in dress, scoffed at for her acquaintances, derided in her drudgery, scolded for her broken spirits, insulted for her faded beauty, and contradicted at every expression of her thoughts. She pines in a misery from which there is no deliverance by the law, because there are no *blows*. She withers body and soul in an atmosphere which is that of a flameless hell; 'one of them is a devil,'—and he who once promised to 'love and to cherish' her, becomes the executioner of a sentence which but too slowly conducts her to the shadow of death.



And here snatch, through the open door, one more hasty glance, as you fly along, at a third 'home,' where numerous children are steadily plaguing each other through years, with a perseverance to which the judgments on Egypt were a transitory evil. Untrained to reserve in desire or self-sacrifice in action, each one is obstinately resolved on obtaining that which is also desired by all the rest. Unused to the control of passion or speech, each vents on brother or sister the anger which refusal or contradiction awakens. From the younger, who squall out their vindictive passion, to the elder who loudly threaten, fiercely abuse, or even, if boys, violently engage in combat, the whole house is full of noises, of menaces, and of wretchedness. Each one is filled with an irritability which a touch exacerbates into fury. The faintest collision brings forth sparks of the electric fire within. Grudges accumulate into steady enmities. Free speech degenerates into a habit of scarification. The


sister ingeniously torments, the brother rudely worries and assails. The balm of sympathy is a blessing never known either in sorrow or in active pursuit. They 'grow together until the harvest,' and that harvest is the maturity of cankered hearts. When they part by marriage or by occupation, to found other unblessed families, the father's house is never more a centre of reunion; but each goes forth to his journey in life, glad to forget a home devoid of grace or gentleness, and a hearth whose sacred fires of love were extinguished by the 'continual droppings' of a storm.

These, it will be said, are extreme cases. They are, indeed, examples of extreme misery, but they are not altogether purely imaginary descriptions. There is a certain number of such wretched households. The generality of homes, however, are neither very happy nor exceedingly miserable. They are of a dull average tone, in which there is mingled enough of affection to prevent the daily




destruction of enjoyment, yet enough of disturbance to break up settled repose.

The quality of the persons in a house has far more to do with their happiness than the condition of the furniture, yet too many are elaborately careful of the one, and neglectful of the other. Every speck of dust will be removed from a table or a mirror, minute attention will be given to guarding against injury the carved leg of a piano, or the floral moulding of a picture-frame, the most punctilious solicitude will be devoted to the cleanliness of the lamps, the whiteness of the linen, or the polish of the silver; but a too slight consideration to those arts of peace which preserve the freshness and beauty of friendship between kindred. At least as much care is worthy to be expended on avoiding injury to the feelings of familiar friends, as on avoiding injury to the moveables. It is surely possible to form a habit of thought before speaking and action, so as to avoid needless friction in daily life. It is a sore evil under



the sun when all the politeness and consideration are decreed to people out of doors, when all the delicate reserve in language, all the disposition to favourable construction, all the friendly interpretation of motive, all the hearty acknowledgment of small favours, are assigned to total strangers. It is saddest of all when the nearness of fireside relationship is used only as an advantage for striking more direct blows, for inflicting deeper wounds, for holding up to closer view little acknowledged infirmities. Home life requires in mankind infinitely more self-restraint and compassionate affection than life in the market-place. To most of us comes sometimes 'an evil day,' when the health of the body disposes to keener impressions of pain, when the trial of spirits by labour, by sickness, or by disappointment, leaves the heart peculiarly sensitive, and thirsty for the refreshment of sympathy. And if, on such occasions, the balm is withheld, or exchanged for rough reprehension or sullen coldness, the result is not such as to invite description.



No closeness of relationship can dispense with the ordinary demands of friendship. Unless the love of husband and wife, of brother and sister, be thus supported, the natural tie will prove unequal to the rubs of life. No friendship is worthy of the name which is not based upon principles essentially Christian. Of these the first is a resolute forgiveness of imperfections, and the second a habit of sincere sympathy.

It is not in the character of angels that we can 'dwell together in unity' on earth ; it is as persons still retaining many traces of imperfection, and requiring daily from Heaven and from each other the exercise of mercy. And where this mercy is not shown, the accumulation of petty offences will soon mount up into causes of serious separation. The pricking of many pins will prove equal in pain to the single stroke of any dagger. We must learn, therefore, to love even the most beloved, in that spirit which covers as with a cloak of benignity human infirmity,

and then we shall be able to maintain an affection which will endure the strain of the world's vexation and vanity.

There is nothing which requires sometimes more watchfulness than not to give offence, and not easily to take it in the intercourse of home. As health preserves a whole skin, capable of bearing friction without pain, so does health of mind preserve us from a diseased irritability. But there are some persons who generally seem as if they had been covered from head to foot with a blister of Spanish flies. There is no limit to their sensitiveness,—they present to their associates a surface of nerves unprotected by skin or tissue. A word enters into them, and poisons their blood before the utterer shall have even divined their injury. With such characters existence can be at best but a series of petty quarrels and reconciliations. He who would enjoy life for himself must consider the enjoyments of others, and certainly few things are more destructive of social

happiness than a rheumatic temper, in which every touch inflicts trouble, and every movement is accompanied with an outcry of suffering.

In family differences, whether of the minor or the major class, there is valuable truth in the old adage, *The least said, the soonest mended*. Full and complete 'explanations' and defences are apt to irritate the original wounds, and to inflict fresh ones. The *defence* is usually worse than the *offence*. The best friends are bad reasoners when the balance of the temper is disturbed. Those who are so bent on identity of view in every case that they must 'have it out,' and dispute till they agree, like the two people in *Wilhelm Meister*, are likely to spend their whole lifetime in campaigning from their desperate love of unity. To dam up the first outbreak of waters is the grand *tactique* of domestic strategy. He who is master of himself at the beginning of a quarrel, needs seldom fear the end—for the end will not be far off, and


the one who can bear a thoughtless unkind word without recrimination exercises greater qualities than he that 'taketh a city.'

For the rest, it is well worth our labour to study the arts of healing in domestic life. Wrath, clamour, perverse disputings, banish God's spirit, and depress our own. When the heart is angry, nothing outside can give pleasure. Sunlight is misery to a bloodshot eye. But love is itself happiness, and it will be the sufficing happiness of heaven. The Deity would be weary of His necessary endless being, if His nature were not Love. It is this alone which renders tolerable to man the prospect of immortality. True goodness never wearies, it charms as long as it endures. All things else would at last grow wearisome; in much wisdom would be much grief, and the spectacle even of paradise with its diamond dew would pall on the sated eye. The weight of ages would at length bow down the head, and cause a universal shudder at the vision of an endless life, if revolving

cycles brought only the experience of evil, in a creation where love was to be unknown.

This fervent love, destined to be the solace of immortals, is given to us as the chief availing balm of life's decay on earth. There is an age—how rapidly men reach it—when the eye, satisfied with seeing, begins to grow dim, and the natural force begins visibly to abate. The mantling flush of the youthful countenance has passed away, and the thrill of early enthusiasm has been exchanged for a sobriety which speaks of declining vigour quite as much as of advancing wisdom. Neither company, nor study, nor books, nor exercise, nor change of scene, nor even Switzerland in all its glory, afford quite the old delight. The stiffening limbs prophesy of a more unconquerable chill, and failing spirits indicate the approach of an hour when the busy heart will beat no more. But 'they sin who tell us love can die,'—for

Love is indestructible,
Its holy flame for ever burneth.



Grim Death himself may be welcomed to release from wedlock uncongenial spirits who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when, from the bonds of a hated marriage, they can find a refuge in the grave. But—thrice happy they for whom the morning light of youthful affection has subsided into a golden afternoon of tenderness and hope—into a sunset of ennobling sympathies,—whose amber and purple gleams foretell ‘a bright rising again,’ and soften the darkness into that grand twilight through which there shines the spangled firmament of Eternity! Yes, thrice happy they who, when life’s day is ended, can join hands on earth, while they gaze up steadfastly toward the western heaven, saying, AND SO SHALL WE EVER BE—WHERE THE SUN SHALL NO MORE GO DOWN.

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